



The Harrier

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

£3.25



Inside:

- Suffolk birds - more winners and losers
- History of Suffolk birdwatching, Part 2
- Sizewell 'C' - a new blot on the landscape?

Contents

Editorial.....	1
Suffolk birds - more winners & losers.....Mick Wright.....	3
A history of Suffolk birdwatching, Part 2.....Steve Piotrowski.....	7
Suffolk clergy & ornithology.....Patrick Armstrong.....	15
Twitter latest.....Phil Whittaker.....	17
BINS Spring.....Lee Woods.....	18
Sizewell 'C' - another blot on the landscape?.....Phil Whittaker.....	23

Field trips

Shingle Street.....Steve Fryett.....	26
Lakenheath & Lackford.....Gi Grieco.....	27

Stone Curlew breeding update.....Phil Brown.....	28
Looking back.....Philip Murphy.....	30

News

Knettishall Dawn Chorus Walk.....Phil Brown.....	32
CSD Family day report.....Roy Marsh.....	33

Announcements

Bursaries.....	37
----------------	----

Red Kites' slow progress.....Steve Fryett.....	38
Eastern & Western Subalpines.....Nigel Odin.....	38

Puzzles

'Tile wall' teaser.....Clive Collins.....	40
Spot the Birdie.....Jeremy Fletcher.....	40

Cover photograph - Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*)

Photographer: Bill Baston. This Turtle Dove was photographed along the entrance track to Lackford Lakes, on 23 June 2002: Canon D60, 500mm f.4 lens + 1.4 teleconverter, 1/400 sec at f5.6, ISO 100. Shot taken from the car window using a beanbag for support.

Contact details for articles, notes and observations are:

Phil Brown, Editor, c/o The Coach House, Denham Road, Dalham, Suffolk CB8 8UB. p.brown@doc-doc.com

All material for the September 2013 Harrier should be with the editor no later than w/e 20 September.

To discuss Council or volunteering opportunities contact Roy Marsh on 01473 430978

Subscription rates (2013)

SOG: Adults - £15.00; Family £17.00

Joint SOG/Suffolk Naturalists' Society: Adults - £28.00; Family - £32.00

Website: www.sogonline.org.uk Email: info@sogonline.org.uk

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group Registered Charity No. 801446



The Harrier

June 2013 Magazine No.173

Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Spring into action

Once again spring has been delayed this year. With March being the coldest for fifty years, it's not surprising it was initially quiet on the birding front (for instance Spotted Flycatchers were only noted in numbers in early June). But hopefully we won't have a repeat of last June's weather - the wettest on record since 1910, that resulted in breeding productivity being largely down - although according to the BTO there were some surprising winners too¹.

But over this period it has been productive for the SOG Council too. The web site development project continues to progress and all of our publicity thinking and materials have now been upgraded in preparation for another round of fundraising.

The switch to a full-colour Harrier throughout seems to have been universally welcomed, but it has financial significance, as does the return of SOG bursaries, so we need to be out and about raising monies and improving our profile throughout this summer and autumn. But, to be successful, we still need volunteers to help man stands and support collection drives - so, if you are willing, please let Roy Marsh know as he is co-ordinating the action.

Now I'm afraid it's time for a bit of a polemic - and I have to admit that what follows is not

necessarily the opinion of all of SOG's Council.

State of Nature - a sorry tale

On 22nd May twenty five conservation and research organisations published the 'State of Nature'. In the editor's opinion this was a major media event and with it came a substantial report that delivered an unprecedented stock-take of UK wildlife. But it made depressing reading. While a few species had lately made gains (notably Otters, Red Kites and the Silver Spotted Skipper), on the whole it was a dismal picture of decline (notably Hedgehogs, Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers and the Garden Tiger Moth).

Of the 3148 species analysed (which only represents 5% of the UK's total of 59,000 species) 60% have declined in the last 50 years. Of these 13% are now in danger of extinction. Over that same period 93% of meadows, 90% of coppiced woodland and 80% of heathlands have been destroyed, along with 44 million pairs of breeding birds disappearing. Across vast swathes of arable East Anglia spring is now silent!

Why these declines? Well it's a litany of the usual suspects. Although climate change was a contributory factor in the decline of some wildlife in most habitats, so also were pollution and invasive species. Depressingly man appeared to be the chief culprit in the form of damaging farming practices, ill-considered land management practices and increasing recreational disturbance putting both flora and fauna under pressure.

But to secure positive changes, such as reduced pesticide use, or countering habitat fragmentation,

¹ c.f. BTO News #303, Breeding season 2012, early results' indicated that the weather had little impact on Song Thrush, Blackbird and Robin breeding success.

or fostering a more considerate use of the countryside, big decisions need to be made. Sadly, unless there is a genuine preparedness to act at governmental level, nothing much will happen to rectify the state of our Nature.

Wrong signal

In fact, unfortunately at present, the signs are quite the reverse. In the very week the State of Nature was published, Natural England announced² its acceptance of the destruction of Buzzard nests on a shooting estate, which is, in my opinion, appallingly short-sighted. Not just because of the barbaric nature of the act itself, but also because of the signal it is sending to every other shooting estate in the country³. These have already almost succeeded in driving the Hen Harrier to extinction in the UK and now this decision is likely to lead to one of the rare pieces of good news on the species front, namely the resurgence of the Common Buzzard, being stalled, perhaps even reversed - all for the sake of 38 million non-native birds bred annually to satiate the dubious pleasures of the shooting fraternity.

Powerless?

Although government must be the ultimate arbiter, SOG itself is not altogether powerless. We do have a track record for lobbying authorities regarding vulnerable habitat and threatened species of birds. In view of the State of Nature we bird enthusiasts ought to consider supporting all ornithological conservation efforts - whether it is finding ways to offset Sizewell 'C' and its potential to destroy scarce habitat and further disfigure the Suffolk coast, or it's lending support to a campaign against the Buzzard's destruction.

In the past the standard response has been confined to signing petitions and/or providing funds to action campaigners, or attending demonstrations. But media continues to evolve. Now social media is the new method of choice for delivering messages or spurring action. This is where Twitter is really beginning to score. By using Twitter, all of these outcomes can be secured from the comfort of your own armchair! It's as easy as that - so really there's no longer any excuse for members not to stand up and

be counted and to get involved by helping to stop any further damage to our vulnerable environment by exploiting social media.

Act now!

Although many of us already do a great deal for birds, sadly doing nothing about issues like these as well will only hasten the destruction of more habitat and the disappearance of more species! Inaction will duly lead to yet more unpalatable declines in the State of the UK's Nature. SOG with its members should be doing its utmost to see to it that this decline is arrested in Suffolk. Together we must continue to act and help preserve what we have. So please support our next email-based campaign - if you agree.

This autumn we'll be repeating the Green Bird Race, but this year it won't be sponsored. If you'd like to participate in this fun event look out for details on our website, Twitter or email. Also, and it's just a reminder, help will be needed with all our various initiatives, so do let Roy or myself know what you're happy to do.

In this issue

So what of the state of this quarter's publication? As usual we have a good deal for you. First, Mick Wright continues to preview the Bird Atlas results for us (don't forget the book itself will be published this autumn). Then Steve Piotrowski continues his history of Suffolk birdwatching with developments during the twentieth century. Next, talking about developments in the twenty-first century, is Phil Whittaker introducing a note of caution about the possibility of Sizewell 'C'. Then there's also some disturbing news about the Brecks' Stone Curlews, offset by two examples of our growing education and awareness initiatives and finally news of the return of the SOG bursary scheme.

There are all of our standard features too - field trip reports, BINS spring list of birds in the county and Philip Murphy's review of this period in the past, plus, at the back, a couple of brain teasers. So enjoy this spring edition and enjoy your birdwatching this summer!

² This timing leaves me unsure as to whether this was a 'let's bury-the-news' tactic, or if the organisation's PR operation is deeply ironic, incompetent or both!

³ While some estates uniformly behave responsibly, others do have rogue elements on their staff prepared to do anything to persecute raptors - the recent case of the felled White-tailed Eagles' nesting tree on the Invermark Estate in Angus could well prove to be such a case.

Editor: Mick Wright continues to delve into the Bird Atlas data to provide us with further insights into the 'State of Nature' of Suffolk's birds.

The declines and increases of a few Suffolk Birds

Following on from my last report in the Harrier 171, here are a few more examples of species that are either declining or increasing.

Losers

Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)



The ongoing decline of the Ringed Plover has been documented by the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group (SOG) members, which have, in the past, monitored this species, and by the national surveys organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) in 1984 and in 2007.

In the main breeding areas in 1984, Ray Waters (1985) concluded that at our largest Ringed Plover colonies, space is becoming limited due to the increased number of human visitors, causing a decline in numbers. In 2007 a comprehensive search of all coastline and suitable estuarine habitat for breeding Ringed Plover found only 43 pairs at 22 locations. Of these 70% (thirty pairs) were found at just five sites, which were the Orwell estuary, Orford Ness, Landguard, Erwarton (River Stour) and Minsmere. All pairs were found breeding on coastal or estuarine sand/shingle habitats, none were found inland on heathland or agricultural sites (Wright 2007).

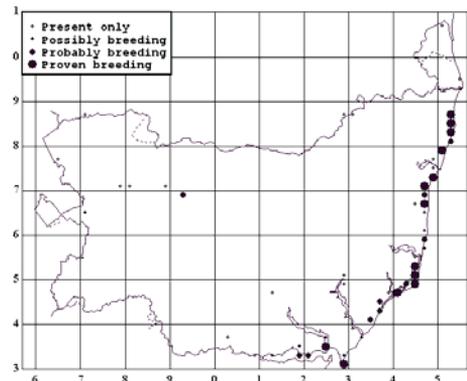
The 2007-11 Atlas of breeding Ringed Plovers, carried out over a four-year period, when compared to the previous Atlas of 1988-91 clearly indicates their ongoing decline.

Ringed Plovers require a distinctive habitat of coastal sand and shingle beaches, or sandy shell substrates above the high water mark, often just behind old tidelines, which are associated with our estuaries. It is without question that their breeding habitats are under intense pressure from our leisure activities.

The Ringed Plover is now on the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) Amber list, however, for Suffolk it ought to be Red listed. The 2007 national survey found that there has been a catastrophic decline in the number of breeding Ringed Plovers in Suffolk of around 77% when compared to the figures from the last major survey in 1984.

To my knowledge, nowhere along the Suffolk coast or the shorelines of our estuaries, have areas been designated for these ground-nesting birds to breed. If we are to have Ringed Plovers breeding on our beaches, in the future, then targeted action is required.

Ringed Plover 2008-2011 breeding data





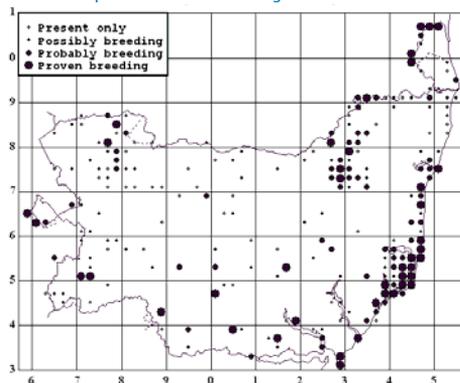
Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)

The Meadow Pipit is an Amber listed species. According to the Common Bird Census/Breeding Bird Survey (CBC/BBS) the trend has been downward since the mid 1970s, with a moderate population decline of 25-50%. This decline is also accompanied by a range contraction from lowland England (BTO).

It is primarily a bird of open habitat, despite being present in fewer numbers in Suffolk, it can still be found on rough grassland, saltmarsh and uncultivated and low-intensity farmland areas. The breeding population is now mainly coastal, especially between East Lane and Southwold. Concentrations occur along the Waveney Valley and around Halesworth and in Breckland, otherwise it is sporadic elsewhere.

The map showing the results from the 2008-2011 Atlas period when compared to the map for the 1989-1992 Atlas period indicates that breeding numbers and the distribution have decreased still further.

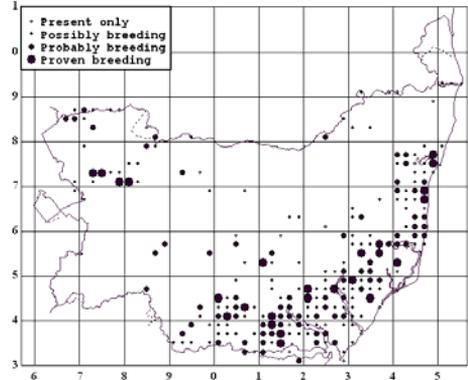
Meadow Pipit 2008-2011 breeding data



Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*)

Within Britain, the distribution of Nightingales has always been restricted to the southeast. Atlas data since the 1960s has shown a clear contraction of breeding range away from the western and northern limits. Census data also shows that numbers have declined strongly in recent decades. The BBS indicates that, between 1995 and 2009, the British Nightingale population decreased by 57%.

Nightingale 2008-2011 breeding data



One possible explanation for the decline is that habitat suitable for Nightingales in which to breed is becoming scarcer. Nightingales require impenetrable bushes, thickets and thick hedgerows in which to build and hide their nests. Throughout the county, scrub, in just about all its forms, is overlooked or actively disparaged as a habitat; in fact there's a tendency to clear scrub and do very little to maintain and extend it. Scrub is such an important habitat for a wide range of fauna. Also, as Nightingales are long-distance migrants, wintering in West Africa, with the extension of the Sahara they might be encountering added barriers to successful migration.

The results from the 2008-2011 Atlas period show a dramatic concentration in the south-east and a clear change in distribution when compared with the 1989-1992 Atlas period. With regard to changes in population size, more analysis of the Atlas data needs to be carried out, although the distribution map suggests a healthy population. A BTO national Nightingale survey was undertaken in 2012-2013, the results of which are eagerly awaited.



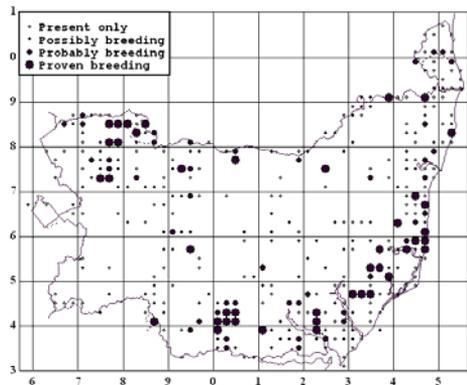
Winners

Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)

Since 1830, when the first nest was reported at Stoke-by-Nayland (Babington 1884-1886), it appears that the Hobby bred sporadically up until the mid-1970s (Piotrowski 2003). It is clear from Suffolk Bird reports and SOG bulletins that, during the 1980s and 1990s, summer records of Hobby's being seen in suitable breeding habitat increased considerably. In 1987 eight pairs were considered breeding in the county and in 1991 there was a minimum of 15 territories. Following the breeding raptor and owl survey carried out by SOG over the period 1995-1998, Wright (2001) stated that the breeding status for Hobby was increasing but is variable between years and estimated the breeding population to be 15 - 25 pairs.

The map showing the results from the 2008-2011 Atlas period indicates that breeding numbers are still on the increase with breeding being proven in 40 tetrads.

Hobby 2008-2011 breeding data

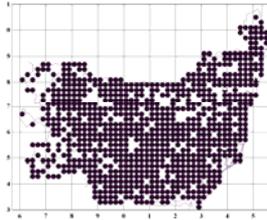




Green Woodpecker (*Picus viridis*)

The Green Woodpecker is a resident species, sedentary and site faithful to breeding areas. This species prefers deciduous woodlands yet can be found in parkland and farmland but, as it spends most of its time on the ground feeding predominantly on ants, these birds also require grassland and open scrub areas where ants are plentiful.

Green Woodpecker winter data

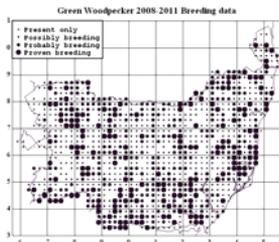


According to Bird Trends (BTO) the Green Woodpecker, nationally, has doubled its population size over the last 40 years. However, in the past, populations have declined due to widespread loss of woodland and to the intensification of farming methods. Numbers also fluctuate owing to severe winters. Over the last forty years there has been a northward spread of this species.

In Suffolk, the Green Woodpecker was found in almost every tetrad during the winter Atlas period of 2008 – 2011 indicating the sedentary nature of this species.

When comparing the 2008-2009 breeding data with that from the 1989-1992 Atlas period, the distribution is far more comprehensive with Green Woodpeckers being seen in many more tetrads. There are however, a lot of 'seen only' dots on the map, which may mean that birds are flying further from their breeding site to find feeding areas.

Green Woodpecker breeding data

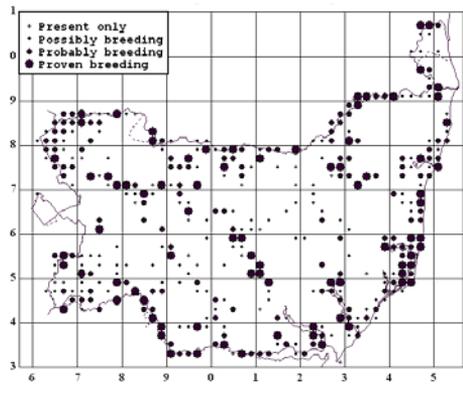


Reed Bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*)

The Reed Bunting is a BoCC Amber listed species and a Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. The UK population of reed bunting fell by 54% between 1970 and 1998 (BTO). The drainage of our wetlands, reduction in damp habitats and food sources and changes in agricultural practices have all had a detrimental effect on this species. In recent years, however, results from BBS suggest a significant population increase, with figures between 1994-96 and 2007-09 indicating that the increase has been widespread.

When comparing the 2008-2009 breeding data with that from the 1989-1992 Atlas period, the distribution appears to be stable in some areas and declining in other areas, especially in the Shotley peninsula, Hollesley and some areas in the southwest.

Reed Bunting 2008-2011 breeding data



References

- [BTO] Data source: British Trust for Ornithology
- Piotrowski S. 2003 The Birds of Suffolk, C Helm
- SBRs Suffolk Bird reports. Published by The Suffolk Naturalists' Society
- Waters, R (1985) BTO Breeding Ringed Plover Survey 1984, Suffolk Ornithologists' Group Summer Bulletin 1985 pp.12-18.
- Wright M. 2001 Survey of Breeding Raptors & Owls in Suffolk 1995-1998, Published by The Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

The history of birdwatching and its relevance to Suffolk - Part 2

The following article is the second part of a paper that details the history of ornithology and its particular relevance to Suffolk. Part one (Piotrowski 2013, Harrier 172) dealt with early birdwatchers, collecting, recording, clubs and societies, bird reserves, local reports and avifaunas. This section covers advances in bird photography, bird song imitating and recording, and books and bird illustrators during the twentieth century.

In the September issue we will complete this history by featuring twitching and bird information services, the use of IT to aid birdwatchers, plus a vision of the future.

Bird photography

Photographing breeding birds at close range began at the end of the 19th century. Brothers Richard and Cherry Kearton pioneered wildlife photography and in 1892 took the first ever photograph of a bird's nest with eggs. In 1895, they published their first book entitled "*British Birds' Nests*", soon followed in 1899 by the publication of "*With Nature and a Camera*" which was illustrated with 160 photographs. Richard went on to develop the photographic hide, after a series of experiments, one of which involved concealing himself in a stuffed ox! The brothers devised many ingenious ways for camouflaging themselves, including using artificial rocks and tree stumps. Their book "*With Nature and a Camera*" includes pictures of birds in flight, one of which was a Barn Owl taken with magnesium flashlight.

Some of the techniques used would have certainly raised an eyebrow today. On occasions, the vast amounts of magnesium powder that was ignited set fire to the surrounding vegetation. The explosion also frightened the birds so much that many failed to return after the first frame was exposed. When working with seabirds, the Kearnons first fired a revolver to disturb the adults, so that the position of a nest could be located, before they descended from the cliff-top with camera and tripod.



Cherry Kearton standing on his brother Richard's shoulders to take a picture of a bird's nest, 1900

Eric Hosking (1909-1991) was the UK's most celebrated bird photographer from the late-1920s through to the early-1990s and he had strong Suffolk connections. He believed that bird photographers should maintain a deep understanding and knowledge of their subjects, and concern for their welfare⁴. Eric began to earn a living from taking and selling bird photographs as early as 1929 and published his first book "*Friends at the Zoo*" in 1933. His legendary

⁴ Editor: Something some of today's photographers would do well to remember.

photograph of *Barn Owl with Vole*, taken in 1948, epitomises the quality of his achievement:



In 1937 an accident, which resulted in the loss of his left eye to a Tawny Owl during a photographic shoot⁵, inspired him to write his famous autobiography entitled "*An Eye for a Bird*", which was published in 1970. Eric captured some wildlife moments that were truly amazing and his photograph of the Macqueen's Bustard at Hinton in 1962 was voted by the British Birds Rarities Committee to be the most iconic shot of all UK rarities right up to this day (Adam Rowlands pers comm). Over his long career he photographed over 2000 species, and his archive collection of over 250,000 black-and-white negatives and 100,000 colour transparencies is now preserved by The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust.

Although born in London, Eric was a regular visitor to Minsmere where he worked with Herbert ('Bert') Axell and pioneered several techniques for bird photography including developing the use of flash to capture a bird in flight. He first used bulbs, progressing to early electronic units and finally photo-cell triggering devices. Derek Moore told me a great story involving Eric at Minsmere, which involved the photographic hide, positioned midway between the South and Look-out hides, reserved exclusively for 'serious' bird photographers.

- Hidebound! -

The hide was squat, extremely small and cramped and must have been very uncomfortable for a prolonged stay. The door never stayed closed without being clasped from the outside. Eric asked if someone could lock him in and he would make a signal by placing his white handkerchief at the front of the hide when he was ready to come out later that morning. Derek and other volunteers then went about their daily business and forgot all about Eric. Sometime during the afternoon, one of them suddenly remembered and looking towards the hide saw the handkerchief being waved frantically. Eric was finally rescued, red-faced and understandably flustered! Eric collaborated with Bert to produce "*Minsmere – Portrait of a bird*

Eric Hosking's iconic photograph of the Macqueen's Bustard at Hinton, 1962



⁵ Eric's son David wrote that he had managed for most of his career with only one eye - as his father had often wryly observed, "you only need one for the camera"!

reserve" in 1977, a fantastic read and an insight into Minsmere's history and how nature reserves and visitors were managed in that bygone era.



Eric Hosking with equipment he needed for a day's shoot

There was a vast amount of equipment that had to be lugged around (see above) to enable bird photographers to be close enough to snap publishable shots and Eric was one of a few photographers of that time who was able to earn a living by taking images only of birds. A huge photograph of Eric, together with Minsmere's first full-time paid warden, Dick Wolfendale and two others unknown, adorns a wall of Minsmere's tearoom today.

- Digital benefits -

Some of the biggest advances of this digital age are in wildlife photography. Gone are the days when success hinged on exceptional light conditions, slow shutter speeds, hours in the darkroom and countless canisters of film. Clicks of the shutter were then often a function of available finances, so the photographer would commonly wait for the right moment rather than firing off an unlimited number of exposures. Digital photography is now affordable and digital cameras plus large lenses are within the price range of many birders.

Suffolk's first Spanish Sparrow at Landguard in August 2012 is one of many rarities of recent

times identified from photographs after the bird had disappeared from view. Identification of rarities from photographs will undoubtedly increase and a time when acceptance of a record for publication will depend on mandatory photographic evidence may not be far away?

The value of digital: retrospective ID

Ian Goodall, photographer writes:

"At RSPB Lakenheath on 30th April this year I thought I'd seen a 'Bittern' flying along but, being so distant, I only half-heartedly pointed the lens at it and fired the shutter without first locking the focus.

This became a classic case of 'ID in retrospect from photographic evidence'. While as you can see the photos were pretty poor (I was annoyed at not doing better when I had the chance) but, in my defence, the bird was flying away along the riverbank and there was only a second or two to get anything. So it wasn't until that night, as I began scanning the images on the laptop to delete the rubbish, that I realised it wasn't a Bittern.



I consulted the "Collins" and could see that I'd actually captured some distant images of a Purple Heron. The pictured bird matched several of the ID features such as the sharp angle in the kink of the neck and it looked more brownish-red on the upper wing than a Grey heron. So I duly e-mailed the management at Lakenheath and they confirmed that it was a Purple Heron - the first sighting for 2013.

Thankfully it was seen again the following day and I expect it is still there, but its skulking behaviour means it's not often sufficiently revealing for good photos".

There may also be a time when it will be the norm for identification to be undertaken after the event? For example, why spend hours in the wind and rain scanning through a gull flock in the hope of finding something unusual, when a few quick snapshots could be rattled off and the species later identified on your computer screen in the comfort of your own home?

However, many birdwatchers are becoming increasingly irritated by batteries of telephoto lenses that are now present at every rarity and by photographers who station themselves in strategic positions in hides waiting for that shot of a lifetime! Nowadays, the cacophony of camera shutters may spoil the experience of those seeking peace and tranquillity, shutter clicks that are completely unnecessary with modern-day technology resulting in hides sometimes becoming noisy places. Then there are those who just have to take that one step closer to their subject and disagreements, some quite physical, between observers and pushy photographers are becoming commonplace.

Most photographers do follow Eric Hosking's example and are concerned for the welfare of birds, but a small minority are obsessed with getting their photograph at any cost. They approach too closely with little concern for the bird, other observers present or on their way to see the bird, use loop voice lures to attract territorial birds and have no respect for bird protection offered by Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The behaviour witnessed by the author at the Otter and Dipper site, on the River Thet at Thetford this winter, had to be seen to be believed. Armies of photographers, charging along the riverbanks, buckets of fish tossed into the river or road-kills laid out to entice the otters and even photographers in wetsuits wading in the river for potential underwater shots! This behaviour may well have had minimal effect on the welfare of the animals being photographed, but it could well have spoil the enjoyment of other observers present.

Birdsong & bird imitators

Learning bird songs and calls has always been one of the most difficult parts of field ornithology and little ditties were often used to help people remember. For example, every birdwatcher would know that "a little bit of bread and no cheese" refers to the Yellowhammer. There are many more, but such ditties can only be attributed to birds that have a repetitive song. Try finding a ditty for the Blackbird? Authors of field guides often repeated the ditties and others put the notes into words such as 'tzi-tzi-tzi-tzi-tzi-tzi tzuuh' for Yellowhammer (Jonsson 1992).



Ludwig Karl Koch (1881-1974) published his *Songs of Wild Birds* in 1936 and this was followed by two other sound-books in 1938. He was also a pioneer of birdsong recording and his recordings, narrated by himself, became familiar to radio listeners during World War II. He was the subject of a 2009 BBC Radio 4 documentary, "*Ludwig Koch and the Music of Nature*". His recordings and manuscript papers are preserved in the British Library Sound Archive. The earliest live broadcast by the BBC featured a bird, a singing Nightingale accompanying Beatrice Harrison on her cello in 1924⁶. This species also starred again in a BBC 1942 'live' broadcast when a Nightingale's backing group were an armada of Wellington bombers!

In 1964 birdsong was put onto vinyl with a long-playing record "A Tapestry of British Birdsong", narrated by Victor C. Lewis, the first birdsong record to be released in the UK. Lewis guided the listener through the different bird habitats, "*from the dawn chorus to the concert at dusk*" and covered 50 species. A box set of 15 LPs (later converted to tape cassettes) became available in the late-1970s and featured over 1000 recordings of nearly 600 species of bird on the European list, taped by about 120 recordists in over 40 countries. The running time totalled 12 hours. The recordings were edited by Sture Palmer, lately of the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation, the doyen of world bird voice recordists with explanatory leaflets for each disc written by Jeffery Boswall of the BBC.

⁶ Though there are dark rumours of a bird imitator being involved to enhance this live outside broadcast!

The age of radio broadcasting brought birdsong into every home, but early broadcasters found it difficult to find good sound recordings. Bird imitators filled this niche and Suffolk could boast that it had the most skilful people in this field.



The doyen of bird imitators, Percy Edwards

Percy Edwards (1908-1996) was a native of Suffolk, arguably one of the greatest bird imitators of all time and one who became a household name. He appeared on shows such as *Ray's a Laugh* with Ted Ray and playing Psyche the dog in the radio series *A Life of Bliss*. At the height of his career he could accurately imitate over 600 bird species along with many other animals.

- A repertoire of over 600 birdcalls and songs -

He provided the voices for the whales in *Orca* (1977), the Reindeer in *Santa Claus: The Movie* (1985), sheep and bird sounds on Kate Bush's song *The Dreaming*, and the alien in the film of the same name. He appeared occasionally on BBC TV's pre-school series *Play School* as a storyteller in 1967 and from 1973-80. One of his last stage appearances was in the Grand Order of Water Rats centenary show at the London Palladium in 1989.

Ronnie Renalde is a legendary music hall singer and siffleur, most famous for his vocalisations, whistling, yodelling and imitations of birdsong. His crystal clear yodelling gained him acceptance with connoisseurs of both Alpine and Country music around the world, but it was for his whistling and bird imitation that he is best remembered. "*If I Were a Blackbird*" (1950) is among Ronnie's most famous songs. He was star billing throughout the 1950s and broke box office records all over the world, becoming a big name in the UK, USA, Australasia, Scandinavia, Africa, South America

and Europe. He was most successful in America and was seen as serious competition to Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. Ronnie had his own BBC radio show from 1949 called *The Voice of Variety* and during this series the volume of Ronnie's fan-mail caused a problem for the BBC. The fan publication *Voice of Variety News* had a print run of 55,000 copies twice a year, and fan clubs during this era existed all across the UK. Thames TV also presented a weekly show entitled *Meet Ronnie Ronalde*. Ronnie lived in Beccles and has recently returned to Suffolk after living in Australia. He still performs and was billed to appear in Beccles in May 2013. Ronnie is a proud member of Waveney Bird Club.

Many later bird imitators also produced some excellent work and one that will live long in the author's memory is the LP: "*Big Jake calls the waders*", which was released in 1980. Big Jake was a familiar figure on the 1980's twitching scene and was a musician rumoured to have played drums for Screaming Lord Sutch and the Savages (Derek Moore pers comm).

Latterly birdsong recording has moved on at pace and modern technology now means that songs and calls of birds throughout the world are available on the Worldwide Web, which can be downloaded onto MP3 players and amplified in the field if necessary.

Artists, Text Books and Field Guides

The history of bird art is obviously a long one - approaching 5000 years. The "*Geese of Meidum*", recently mentioned by Mark Cocker in his *Birdwatching* column, is a masterpiece of Ancient Egypt and one of the earliest examples of birds depicted in paintings. The frieze once adorned the tomb of Egyptian Prince Nefermaat I at Meidum, in the Old Kingdom Mastaba, and dates back to around 2,680-2,258 BC. It shows six geese of three species: Greylag, Greater White-fronted and Red-breasted. The Greylags were once considered to have been Tundra Beans due to leg colour (orange not pink) and black bill nail, but Greylags were more common in Ancient Egypt, so these images are likely to have been of this species. Artistic license was rife



The geese of Meidum

even in those days! The number of species and their positioning is symbolic, as three represents the plural in Egyptian writing. Birds were often featured in Egyptian hieroglyphs, with the “*Tree of Life*” being the most famous. This latter artwork features five birds perched in an Acacia tree, four facing east, representing the first four phases of life and one facing west, representing old age and the approach of death. The direction of life was considered to be in the east where the sun rose and death in the west where the sun set, the point at which individuals would enter the underworld.

Numerous biblical references were almost as ancient too, although these mainly dealt with bird migration (viz. Numbers 11:31-32, The Book of Job 39:26 and Jeremiah 8:7).

Wikipedia’s “*Timeline of ornithology*” details a fascinating history of ornithological events dating back to 1500 BC (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_ornithology). It includes: publication dates of major works; scientific expeditions; last known dates of bird extinctions and foundation dates of Societies worldwide.

There are many milestones in the development of field guides and the changes in artistic impressions and techniques. Unfortunately, space here does not permit them all to be listed, so a summary detailing significant developments follows.

London born George Edwards (1694-1773) devoted himself to the observation and representation of indigenous and non-indigenous species of birds, either live specimens or those imported from abroad. He learned the technique of engraving and produced his own drawings, the results of his work appears in his natural historical works “*A national history of uncommon birds*” (1743-51) and “*Gleanings of natural history*” (1758-64). He often added insects, especially butterflies, to the hand-coloured compositions of his illustrated engravings. His first time descriptions of numerous birds were used as the basis for his scientific naming of about 300 species.

Thomas Bewick (1753-1828) was an English engraver and naturalist and the best bird illustrator of his time. He adopted metal-engraving tools to cut hard boxwood across the grain, thereby revolutionising the printing of illustrations using wood. By including detailed backgrounds, he attempted to demonstrate the habitats frequented by each species. Gradually he turned to illustrating, writing and publishing his own books, gaining an adult audience for the fine illustrations in “*A History of Quadrupeds*”. Bewick is best known for his “*A History of British Birds*”, which is admired today mainly for its wood engravings.



The French-American naturalist John James Audubon (1785-1851) was educated in Paris and noted for his expansive studies to document all types of American birds and for his detailed illustrations that depicted the birds in their natural habitats. His major work, a colour-plate book entitled *The Birds of America* (1827-1839), is considered one of the finest ornithological works ever completed⁷. It consisted of 435 colour plates, containing 1055 figures of life-size birds. The plates were more life-like than any previously published, but misshaped as they were drawn from skins. Audubon identified 25 new species during his lifetime.

Archibald Thorburn (1860-1935) was a Scottish artist and bird illustrator, painting mostly in watercolour. He published his own *British Birds* (1915-1916) in four volumes with plates showing up to 11 species that could be seen in that habitat type.

⁷ Adam Gretton observed that it is the most expensive too, having commanded a price of £6.5 million at an auction in December 2010

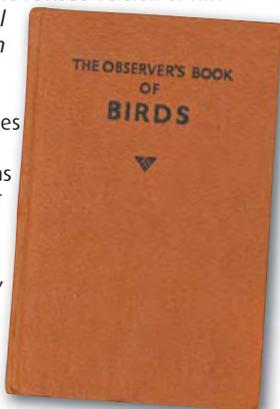
The Handbook of British Birds was a pioneering bird guide by H.F. Witherby, Rev. F.C.R. Jourdain, Norman F. Ticehurst and Bernard W. Tucker, published in five volumes by H. F. & G. Witherby between 1938-1941.

Eric Ennion (1900-1981) was a famous mid-twentieth century Cambridge-Suffolk bird illustrator. Born in Burwell, Cambridgeshire, after being a GP for twenty years, in 1945 he helped set up and became the first warden of the Field Study Centre at Flatford Mill then, subsequently in 1964 along with Robert Gillmor, was the co-founder of the Society of Wildlife Artists. His numerous illustrations demonstrate his familiarity with both Tuddenham and Cavenham Heath.



Ennion's distinctive illustrative style is clearly evident in this Cavenham Heath 'Stonie' sketch of 1937

The Handbook, as it was often cited, was itself a much enlarged and revised version of H.F. Witherby's *Practical Handbook of British Birds* (published between 1919 and 1924 as two volumes in three parts). The latter handbook was reprinted a number of times, until at least the eighth impression in 1958, to eventually be superseded by *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*.



The author was brought up on The Observer's Books series, as were most budding naturalists of his era. They were small, pocket-sized books, published by Frederick Warne & Co from 1937 to 2003. They covered a variety of topics including hobbies, art, history and wildlife. The first Observer's guide was published in 1937 was of British birds, which was illustrated by those wonderful Thorburn plates. It is now a very rare book indeed, with a mint copy in a dust cover worth hundreds of pounds.

Up to the 1950s, most bird plates detailed birds in profile with scruffy old females and immatures hiding behind immaculate males in full breeding dress. The text may have given details on habitat, distribution, range and behaviour but, as non-birding artists drew many plates using bird skins for reference, some unrealistic images were the result. Following the publication of a number of American field guides, Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996), an American naturalist, ornithologist, artist, and teacher, co-wrote *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* with Guy Mountfort and P.A.D. Hollom. A revised and enlarged edition was published in 1965 in collaboration with I.J. Ferguson-Lees and D.I.M. Wallace and reprinted in 1971 and 2004. Although a significant proportion of the plates were in black and white, Peterson helpfully used arrows to show diagnostic characteristics.

In the 1950s and 1960s, packets of Brooke Bond tea included illustrated cards, usually 50 in a series, which were collected by many children. One of the most famous illustrators of these cards was Charles Tunnicliffe (1901-1979), the internationally acclaimed bird painter.



The first edition of the Hamlyn Guide (Bruun 1970) was published in a hardwearing paperwork format that fitted neatly in the pockets of twitchers' Barber jackets that were so fashionable at that time. The plates were all in full colour and it became the birder's bible of that and the proceeding decade. However, as artists frequently copied each other's paintings, errors of previous publications were repeated and amplified in the Hamlyn Guide. For example, the missing wing-bars on Golden Plover; the lack of white under-tail coverts on female Teal to distinguish it from female Garganey; and, as for the drawings of 'big' Chiffchaffs disguised as Icterine and Melodious Warblers, it's a wonder that anyone could identify those species!



Lars Jonsson, who revolutionised bird artwork in his Penguin Guides, published between 1978 and 1982, rescued this state of affairs. His series of five books (a direct translation of the original Swedish books) was later collated into *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*, published in 1992. Jonsson painted birds in poses more likely to be encountered in the field, with heads looking out from the page, flight and group formation drawings, with the artist portraying both the form and character of the birds - altogether a superb piece of work.

Modern-day field guides play an important role in field identification and there are none more complete than the *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson et al. 1999 and 2010) that brings us up to the present day.

The story continues in the next issue with a review of the impact of technology in this century and Steve's vision for the future.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks are due to John Grant for proofreading the manuscript and Derek Moore for his help with the birdsong and photography sections of this article. David Hosking on behalf of "The Eric Hosking Charitable Trust" has kindly allowed the publication of Eric's amazing photographs. More information on the life histories of many of those mentioned in this paper can be gleaned from the free online encyclopaedia "Wikipedia", which formed the principal source for each character described. I am grateful to the anonymous authors for providing this information.

References:

- Axell, H.E. and Hosking, E. 1977. Minsmere - Portrait of a Bird Reserve, The Anchor Press, Tiptree, Essex
- Bruun, B. 1970. The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe. The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited
- Hosking, E.J. 1933. Friends at the zoo. Oxford University Press, London
- Jonsson, L. 1992. Birds of Europe. A & C Black, London
- Kearton, R and C. 1895. British Birds' Nests: how, where, and when to find and identify them. Cassell & Co. London
- Kearton, R and C. 1899. With wildlife and camera. Cassell & Co. London
- Peterson, R.T. 1954. A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe. William Collins, London
- Piotrowski, S.H. 2013. The history of birdwatching and its relevance to Suffolk. The Harrier 172: 6-11
- Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterstrom, D. and Grant, P. 1999. Collins Bird Guide. Collins. London
- Svensson, L., Mullarney, K., Zetterstrom, D. and Grant, P. 2010. Collins Bird Guide (2nd Edition). Collins. London

Editor: This next article was inspired by Part 1 of Steve's history. In it Patrick Armstrong underlines the important contribution made by the clergy to British ornithology; a piece partially based on the author's own 'parsonage' past.

Patrick Armstrong

The Parson-Naturalist in Suffolk Ornithology

Steve Piotrowski's fascinating article on the early history of birdwatching in Suffolk (The Harrier, 172, March 2013) mentions the role of several clergy in the development of ornithology in the county, commencing with the work of the Reverends Revett Sheppard (1778-1830) and William Whitear, who published their list 1824-1825. I should like to explore this relationship – that of the Church of England parson and ornithology – in a little more detail.

There are several reasons for the persistence of the link for many generations.

Continuity in the Countryside

First, the legal doctrine of parson's freehold. A parson in his parish, for good or ill, was in former times extremely difficult to displace. An incumbent might remain in one benefice for the better part of his career. There are instances of a clergyman being born and dying in the same room of the same rectory, when a son followed his father in a living. This last might happen where a family had the *Advowson*, or the *right of presentation* to a benefice, so that members of the same family or related families might hold the living for several generations. As a consequence this often meant that an individual came to know an area, its landscape, and natural history (including its birds), extremely well. For example, the Reverend John Stevens Henslow (1796-1861; distinguished naturalist and Charles Darwin's teacher at Cambridge) was Rector of Hitcham for 24 years, and used that area of Suffolk extensively for natural history observations.



Reverend Professor John Stevens Henslow, distinguished botanist and friend and mentor of Charles Darwin

Joy in Creation

Second, there were strong theological imperatives for the study of natural history. John Ray (1627-1705; ornithologist, botanist, entomologist, palaeontologist, theologian), whose importance in the development of modern science was mentioned in Steve's article, knew much of the natural history of Suffolk, as well as the adjoining counties of Essex and Cambridgeshire. He set out the notion that 'design implies a designer' in *The Wisdom of God* in 1692. This point of view partly explains the extraordinary diligence of some nineteenth century parson-naturalists who spent decades studying obscure groups such as mosses, fungi, beetles, sponges or spiders, as well as birds and flowers. For no fragment of the diversity and complexity of the great glory of Creation should be missed.

Moreover, if birds are part of 'God's world', strenuous efforts should also be made to conserve them. Although the 'hunting and shooting parson' was a figure met with in the nineteenth century

countryside, by the twentieth he had largely disappeared. The Reverend Peter Hartley (1909-1985) had an active ministry in East Anglia, and held the post of Archdeacon of Suffolk from 1970 to 1975; he was enthusiastic about conservation, particularly in his role with the RSPB. He wrote occasional articles for its journal, *Bird Notes*.

The Network

Also, every parson was linked with a network of other clergy – those of his deanery and diocese that he met regularly, and those, perhaps further afield, with whom he had studied at university or theological college. Such a network could be pressed into service when information was sought for a county ornithological monograph, or some other piece of research. For example, the Reverend Churchill Babington (1821-1889) was able to make use of a wide network of clerical connections. He acknowledged the help of a dozen clergy in his search for records for *The Birds of Suffolk* (1884-1886) including the Reverend W H M M Carthew of Woodbridge and the Reverend A. Foster-Miller of Redgrave. *The Ornithology of Suffolk* followed (1891), from the Reverend Julian Tuck (1851-1933), of Tostock. Countless other examples of Suffolk clergy ornithologists and other naturalists come to mind, such as the Reverend (later Venerable) William Kirby (1759-1850) who was Vicar of Barnham: his classic *Introduction to Entomology* (1815-1826) was extensively used by Darwin aboard HMS Beagle.

Changing patterns

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century there was usually one parson in every parish. He was usually an educated man, and a person of consequence. Moreover, he had the time leisure and opportunity to follow some interest such as ornithology, botany or perhaps local history. Alas this is seldom the case to day. There has come the concept of the *United benefice*, whereby many parishes are grouped together, so the Vicar or Rector's workload in greatly increased. The administrative burden has also widened, so that sometimes the clergyperson is expected to undertake welfare and other tasks. Necessary though this may have been, it has occasioned something of a loss to the countryside, to natural history and to conservation.



The Reverend Edward Allworthy Armstrong, the distinguished British ornithologist

A personal coda

At this point I should perhaps declare a personal interest. My father, Edward Armstrong (1900-1978) sometimes thought of himself as the 'last of the English parson-naturalists', although he wasn't, quite, and he was Irish. At an early point in his clerical career he was a curate at St Mary's, Stoke, Ipswich, and made many excursions and observations in the Suffolk Sandlings region. Later, after years of ministry in the Far East and in northern England, he returned to East Anglia, and although based in Cambridge, made regular visits to Suffolk, doing a great deal of birding there. His books on *The Wren*, *The Birds of the Grey Wind*, *Bird Song* and *Bird Display and Behaviour* owe much to Suffolk days. And I owe much to the birdwatching walks across Westwood Marshes, along Dunwich Cliffs, around Westleton Heath and Minsmere, that I took with him, as he taught me how to rejoice in the diversity, mystery and beauty of the natural world, while I was a young lad, long, long, ago.

Biographical Note

Patrick Armstrong went on his first birdwatching visit to Suffolk at the age of four in the spring of 1946. He later wrote his PhD thesis on the ecology of the Suffolk Sandlings. He now holds the positions of Adjunct Professor of Geography at the University of Western Australia, and at Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, Western Australia. His book *The English Parson-Naturalist: a Companionship Between Science and Religion*, was published by Gracewing in 2000. Patrick has also written on the life and work of Charles Darwin and is a SOG member.

SOG still a tweet, tweet, tweeting



We have been running a Twitter site for two years and it is continuing to be a useful medium for members and others who wish to rapidly access bird information and communicate news about all matters conservation and birding.

We now have 525 followers (quite a small number for an organisation such as ours) and we are following well over a thousand tweeters. Our contacts have continued to grow and there is a constantly updated stream of informative tweets from mainstream organisations such as BTO, Natural England, RSPB and SWT. The 'wit and witticisms' continue to amuse and these run alongside serious comment from a wide range of local and national birders and conservationists; as well as a few, 'just interested' followers. It is difficult to estimate how many members we have who contribute to our site, as some followers are anonymous except for their twitter tag, but I suspect there are only a few of our 400+ members, which does limit successful and immediate communication of issues affecting our membership.

As an active form of lobbying Twitter can be a very powerful force, but only if members are actively engaged in lobbying by tweeting and re-tweeting petitions and expressing their concerns directly to the powers that be. Twitter has given everybody the opportunity to respond easily and directly and recent campaigns against issues such as birds of prey persecution and Turtle Dove shooting in Morocco have had some success, but many of our members may not have been aware of these.

An important Twitter development over the past year has been the advent of totally free bird information services, formed by groups of birders who share information using tweets. In the north of the county it has been used successfully as a rare bird alert between individual birders for some time. I have benefitted and contributed to sharing 'local patch' bird news in the Gipping Valley; but this is very focussed in terms of locality and in my

opinion is in no way a substitute for Suffolk BINS. It would entail a great deal of time and a constant effort to replicate this excellent countywide service.

However, on the national scene, tweeters like Rare Bird News are offering free Twitter updates of national rarity sightings that are very useful for those who don't wish (or can't afford) to buy an expensive pager or SIMs phone alerts from bird alert providers. I've used it successfully myself on a number of occasions to report in sightings when out of Suffolk, and to receive information and pass them on to other Twitter users. It's a bit like back to Nancy's Café, Cley (but online) for those of us old enough to remember that quaint old system of accessing bird news! Obviously, having mobile access to Twitter when out and about is a big advantage for sending and receiving bird news, or even 'up-to-the-minute' local traffic or general news items. A live Twitter feed will soon be available on our webpage @sogonline.org.uk

As a method of communication Twitter is still in its infancy and it is constantly developing and improving, mainly through the efforts of the Twitter community itself. I use it as an enhancement to my birding, supplemented by a whole range of other social media such as blogs websites.

Join Twitter at @suffolkbirds1 - it's all free!

Join SOG Council

One position is already vacant and others will be forthcoming. So, if you want to be a more active member of SOG and part of the team taking the Group forward, then contact Roy Marsh on 01473 430978

Spring BINS

Although the coldest March for fifty years meant another quiet spring was in the offing, nevertheless, as this summary of BINS activity shows, there were still some excellent highlights, culminating with a mega in mid-June.

March 2013

The Great Grey Shrike was at Wrentham again 3rd and 17th and a Shorelark was on Havergate Island RSPB 27th. Highlights from Landguard NR during the month were an adult Iceland Gull 17th and a Long-eared Owl 20-22nd also several Black-throated Divers were seen flying past the reserve during the month. A Black-throated Diver was at Felixstowe Ferry until 3rd and up to two Black Brants remained at Felixstowe Ferry until 5th. A Little Auk was off Slaughden 21st.

Rough-legged Buzzards were noted over Barrow Bottom 13th, Benacre 15th, Trimley Marshes SWT 18th and Freston Hill 28th. A Hooded Crow was again at Covehithe 5th and 21st and another at Lowestoft 29-30th.

A Great White Egret was seen at Kessingland 6th. The four Tundra Bean Geese remained at Reydon until 3rd, whereas six flew over Westleton 3rd and what were presumed the same six individuals seen at North Warren RSPB 1st. On the River Stour there were up to eight Slavonian Grebes and Long-tailed Duck. Three Slavonian Grebes were on Alton Water 18th. Smew numbers at Minsmere RSPB peaked at twelve birds and a good count of eight Hawfinch were at Sotterley Park.

The icy winds from the continent impeded the arrival of early summer migrants. Only small numbers managed to battle through the rather unseasonal weather that we were experiencing at the time.

(See full list of earliest arrival dates of species at the end of this article on page 22)

April 2013

A Great Bustard which was photographed at Lavenham caused a flurry of excitement but unfortunately could not be found the next day 17th. The big question is could it have been one of the introduced Salisbury birds, on the wander or perhaps a wild bird from Europe?



Subalpine Warbler

A very early contender for bird of the year was the discovery of an Eastern Subalpine Warbler that was at Landguard NR 26-27th. This bird proved very popular and was a photographer's dream as it was showing down to a mere few feet at times!



Red-rumped Swallow



Rose-coloured Starling

Also from the Med came a **Red-rumped Swallow** at Kessingland 18th-19th, a **Serin** briefly at Landguard NR 23rd, a first-summer **Rose-coloured Starling** at Orford 23rd-28th and a **Golden Oriole** at Levington from the 28th that stayed four days, though proved very mobile and elusive. A **Shorelark** was on Havergate Island RSPB until 7th.



Black-necked Grebe

A presumed escape **White Stork** that was initially seen in Norfolk at Breydon Water was later seen heading over Kessingland 6th. **Black-necked Grebe** was seen on the river by the sluice at Benacre on Saturday 13th. **Great White Egrets** were noted at North Warren RSPB from 25th and then two birds at Minsmere RSPB from 29th until 2nd May with one bird remaining until the 6th May. A drake **Green-winged Teal** was a one-day bird at North Warren RSPB on the 14th and a female **Ferruginous Duck** that was found on pools behind South at Minsmere RSPB on the 17th remained until 9th May.

Three **Black-throated Divers** were off Landguard NR 1st and a summer plumaged **Black-throated Diver** was off Pakefield 10th.



White-tailed Eagle and lunch!

A juvenile **White-tailed Eagle** flew from Norfolk into Suffolk airspace and was seen to head south over several locations between Minsmere RSPB and Butley 6th, where it spent a few days before heading north and was reported from within the Benacre estate 10-11th. Another was reported Thorndon 17th. **Black Kites** were sighted over Bramfield 11th, Stowmarket 13th and Westleton 21st. Two **Honey Buzzards** were seen to come 'in off' over Felixstowe 29th and another had been noted over Knodishall on the 28th.



Garganey

Garganey were noted at Hazelwood Marshes SWT with six birds present on the 7th. A **Bluethroat** was heard singing along the cliff face at Gorleston on the 16th but was never seen, and belated news of a **Hoopoe** that was present for two days (18th-19th) from Barking near Needham Market was forthcoming. A singing **Wood Warbler** was present for a few days in the South belt at Minsmere from the 27th. A **Hawfinch** was frequenting feeders at Bawdsey Hall from the 29th for four days.

A **Long-eared Owl** was found roosting at Gunton on the 5th, but may have been around since the 1st and another was at Benacre 13th. **Ravens** were reported from Orfordness NT 10th, Minsmere RSPB 14th and Stoke-by-Nayland 17-18th. A **Hooded Crow** was again seen at Lowestoft 5th.

Finally the 30th provided the first sighting of the year of **Purple Heron** that was seen and photographed at Lakenheath Fen RSPB.

May 2013

The month of May has always been regarded as one of the better within the calendar year, and as expected started off in good form with many scarce species being seen around the county.

Hooded Crow South over Easton Bavents on the 1st started the ball rolling. A report of two **Black Storks** south over the reserve at Minsmere on the 1st then over Haverhill the following day would have proved popular had they landed. Two **Common Crane** were seen to fly south over Boyton Marsh on the 2nd.

An absolutely stunning adult male **Red-footed Falcon** was seen over Lakenheath Fen RSPB from the 3rd until the 30th at least, and at times showing impeccably well. Observers watching the Red-foot were also treated to a 'reeling' **Savi's Warbler** from 25th - 30th at least, which also showed well on occasions. **Temminck's Stints** were seen at Boyton Marsh on both the 5th and 17th, Minsmere on the 14th and finally Trimley Marsh on 18th.

Minsmere had a purple spell around mid-month with **Purple Heron** 7th-8th, **Cattle Egret** present on the levels on the morning of the 11th, **Savi's Warbler** 'reeling' from the reedbed on the 12th, 23rd and then again on the 29th, **Common Crane** over the levels 13th and finally two **Caspian Gull**

(adult) on 18th with a first-summer bird seen the following day. The **Cattle Egret** was then seen on South Marsh, North Warren on the afternoon of 11th.

Honey Buzzards were seen over Lower Hollesley Common, two birds on the 8th, single bird then over St. Olaves on the 10th, one West over Otley College on the 14th and finally two birds in off at Landguard the following day. An unseasonal **Hen Harrier** was seen to fly North over Thorpeness just inland of the disused caravan park on the 6th.

A local mega at Landguard was discovered on the common on the 8th in the form of a **Grey Partridge**, the last sighting of the species at this site was way back in 1982, so a welcome grip back for many regulars!

Spoonbill numbers peaked with eight birds on Tinkers Marsh, Walberswick 17th-19th, up to six at Minsmere mid-month and several single bird sighting throughout the month up and down the coast.

A **Montagu's Harrier** was seen on Orfordness NT on the 5th, the same site also held a **Pectoral Sandpiper**, seen briefly on the 12th before flying off south. The continued watch on Tinkers Marsh produced a juvenile **Glaucous Gull** on the 14th, the drake Garganey remained all month and a **Little Stint** was present on the 20th.

The 14th saw a **Marsh Warbler** trapped at Landguard along with a **Wood Warbler** that was also discovered in the same net on the same net round, another **Wood Warbler** was ringed on the 27th; otherwise LBO was pretty quiet given the time of year!

The first returning **Golden Oriole** at Lakenheath Fen RSPB was heard on the 16th and then sporadically until the month's end, also from this site a **Montagu's Harrier** was reported west on the 9th. A female **Golden Oriole** was reported from Minsmere by the Canopy hide 25th.

Red-footed Falcon





Red-backed Shrike

The 18th saw the arrival of two adult male Red-backed Shrikes in the county, one at Landguard and the other on the Denes Oval, Lowestoft where the next day it was joined by an adult female Woodchat Shrike! Further male Red-backed Shrikes were found by the sheep fields at Easton Bavents, Southwold on 25th-26th and on Orfordness and Westwood Marsh, Walberswick both on 26th.

Raven continued its good run of recent sightings with a bird seen over Burrow Hill, Butley before drifting over towards Gedgrave on the 18th. A first-summer male Montagu's Harrier was seen from the South wall at Breydon on several dates from the 19th until the 24th at least, nearby two Common Crane were seen just north of Barnby on Castle Marsh on the 23rd.

A female Red-footed Falcon was seen briefly in the west of the county by the A134/Marshalls Green junction near Assington before flying off south. An Osprey was seen to fly west up the Blyth valley from Mells Hamlet (TM.410.769) then, presumably the same individual, was seen later over Somerleyton?

The 29th looks as though it was a case of the 'one that got away' with a Swift species sporting a white rump that resembled Pacific Swift over the lagoons at East Lane, Bawdsey for 40 minutes before drifting off north, much to the dismay of the arriving birders! And finally a Wryneck was seen around the farm building at Banter's Barn, Boyton though it proved very elusive.

STOP PRESS

The Pacific Swift that didn't get away

This**MEGA** PACIFIC SWIFT was discovered at Trimley Marsh SWT over the reserve viewed from last hide at 10:40hrs and remained on show for the rest of the day and up to 16:05pm the following day allowing many to connect - from as far afield as Fife! Despite the long walk down to Trimley Marshes SWT reserve, it is estimated that 2500 birders connected with this Asian mega throughout its two-day stay. This is the first twitchable record of this species since the 1993 individual spent an afternoon at Cley Marshes, Norfolk, therefore a new addition for very many!

Earliest arrivals - ever and 2013

Species	Earliest Ever	Location	2013	Location
Purple Heron	09/04/08	Minsmere	30/04/13	Lakenheath Fen RSPB
Garganey	28/02/73	Walberswick	25/03/13	Island Mere, Minsmere
Osprey	10/03/12	Hollesley Common	13/04/13	Lowestoft
Montagu's Harrier	15/04/51	Walberswick	05/05/13	Orfordness
Honey Buzzard	20/04/02	Felixstowe	28/04/13	Knoddishall
Hobby	23/03/09	Felixstowe	13/04/13	Lakenheath
Stone Curlew	11/02/72	Levington	17/03/13	Cavenham Heath
Wood Sandpiper	15/04/68	Minsmere		
	15/04/10	Cattawade	25/04/13	Minsmere South levels
Little Ringed Plover	03/03/97	Trimley Marsh	17/03/13	Cattawade Flash
Temminck's Stint	21/04/02	Minsmere	05/05/13	Boyton Marsh
Common Tern	26/03/80	Sizewell	10/04/13	Pipps Ford
Arctic Tern	06/04/99	Alton Water		
	06/04/03	Lackford	16/04/13	Lackford SWT
Roseate Tern	14/04/60	Havergate Is		
Little Tern	08/04/89	Havergate Is	13/04/13	Lackford Lakes
Black Tern	07/04/67	TBC	25/04/13	Minsmere & Gt Livermere
Sandwich Tern	06/03/69	Minsmere		
	06/03/05	Kessingland	08/03/13	Ness Point & Orfordness
Turtle Dove	02/04/55	Flatford	16/04/13	Mutford
Cuckoo	14/03/90	Wickhambrook	12/04/13	Landguard
Nightjar	16/04/65	Blaxhall	04/05/13	Hollesley
Swift	16/03/83	Beccles	14/04/13	Ipswich (Alan Road)
Hoopoe	28/02/67	Chillesford	18/04/13	Barking nr Needham Mkt
Wryneck	05/03/68	Gt. Bealings	29/05/13	Boyton
Sand Martin	21/02/90	Bawdsey Cliff	10/03/13	Seafield Bay, Stour Est
Swallow	06/03/22	TBC	31/03/13	Melton
House Martin	17/02/98	Southwold	10/04/13	Loompit Lake, Trimley
Tree Pipit	21/03/68	Walberswick	13/04/13	Kings Forest
Yellow Wagtail	27/02/42	Woodbridge	07/04/13	Burrow Hill, Butley
Nightingale	03/04/91	Mkt Weston		
	03/04/02	Minsmere	13/04/13	Westleton Heath
	03/04/12	Alton Water		
Bluethroat	12/03/06	Landguard	16/04/13	Gorleston
Whinchat	20/03/64	Gedgrave	15/04/13	Lowestoft
Redstart	19/03/56	Pakefield	12/04/13	Kessingland Sluice
Wheatear	25/02/90	Lakenheath	19/03/13	Landguard
Ring Ouzel	06/03/03	Bentley	07/04/13	Weybread GPs
Grasshopper Warbler	01/04/89	Hepworth & Chillesworth	17/04/13	Fisher Row
Sedge Warbler	22/03/02	Minsmere	13/04/13	Lakenheath Fen
Marsh Warbler	10/05/02	Thorpeness	14/05/13	Landguard
Reed Warbler	04/04/11	Minsmere	19/04/13	East Lane & Minsmere
Icterine Warbler	14/05/80	Walberswick		
	14/05/09	Thorpeness,		
	14/05/09	Shingle St/LBO		
Lesser Whitethroat	04/04/59	TBC	16/04/13	Landguard
Whitethroat	22/03/12	Shingle Street	13/04/13	Alton Water
Garden Warbler	30/03/12	Mill Meadow School Gazeley	20/04/13	Ferry Rd, Bawdsey
Wood Warbler	12/04/72	Martlesham	27/04/13	Minsmere
Willow Warbler	27/02/11	Ransomes Ind Est	08/04/13	Sotterley Park
Spotted Flycatcher	09/04/83	Nacton	11/05/13	Long Melford
Pied Flycatcher	01/04/83	Tostock	20/04/13	Lound Lakes
Golden Oriole	19/04/97	Badley	28/04/13	Levington Lagoon
Red backed Shrike	17/04/?	TBC	18/05/13	Landguard & Lowestoft Denes Oval

Our Group's Secretary expresses some concerns about the possibility of nuclear power generation being expanded in Suffolk.



Phil Whittaker Sizewell 'B', already a 'blot' on our landscape, might now be joined by 'C' - the 'carbuncle'?

Suffolk's biggest construction project Sizewell 'C' - another blot on our landscape?

It was pleasing to read in the local press recently that EDF Energy had won the Wildlife Trusts' Biodiversity Benchmark for its efforts with Suffolk Wildlife Trust around the Sizewell 'B' site. Christine Blythe, EDF Energy's biodiversity manager said; "We are making a positive contribution towards the conservation of biodiversity as we recognise how important it is to economic performance as well as our health and well being. The management of our site Sizewell 'B' contributes to the delivery of an integrated network of rich habitat along the Suffolk coast."

All ventures of this kind should of course be warmly applauded and recognised by anyone interested in conservation in Suffolk. However, those concerned about birds or wider conservation in Suffolk should be in no doubt about the impact, (if it is eventually given the green light) of the Sizewell 'C' twin reactor development project

which is now in the early stages of the planning process.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the RSPB, both with reserves immediately adjacent to the site, have expressed concern about the initial planning outlines submitted by EDF.



This is what 'B' plus 'C' will look like, excluding the extensive construction site access to the south and west

If this development takes place biodiversity loss will be significant and it is disquieting at the present time that the Stage 1 planning proposals offer little real detail about if, how, or where these losses will be offset by provision of a suitable package of reciprocal ecological benefit. Some of the concerns voiced by our local conservation organisations are:

1. Disturbance

From noise and lighting during construction. This will be significant as it will be a prolonged nine-year project and potential disturbance may cover a 24-hour period. It is worth noting that many recently completed nuclear power plant projects have exceeded their initial time lines by many years. Disturbance will of course impact mostly upon Sizewell Belts SWT Reserve the closest next-door neighbour. Constructor sites will have to be established for the duration of the project, in the immediate area to house up to 5000+ workers and the location of these and the consequent population change and increased recreational pressure on such a small area is bound to have a major impact on sensitive wildlife sites nearby.

2. Loss of and fragmentation of SSSI habitat within the footprint of the construction site

Birds, Barbastelle bats, Adder, newts, Natterjack Toads all use the proposed site. The scale of the footprint of the twin reactor site will mean a loss of a significant range of key species. Ecological surveys have taken place, but these relate to an earlier and smaller proposal and do not adequately assess the impact of the present scale of the proposed twin reactor site which, according to EDF, will eventually cover 305 hectares, including some of the present SSSI habitat. This figure does not account however for new roads, light railways and helicopter pads.

3. Possible changes to the distribution of marine and bird life offshore with new outfalls and jetties to be constructed and staying in place in the long-term, or even permanently.

Ecologists assessing the possible impact of these structures are studying the seas off Sizewell and reports will be written to assess the possible impact on marine and bird life using the area. Many seabirds benefit presently from the water outfalls from Sizewell as the water from the reactors

is pumped out and stirs up sediments and marine life. The potential impact of any new structure and its construction is presently unknown. A beneficial impact could be the provision of Kittiwake breeding platforms on any new proposed structure. Many birds from the arctic regions spend the winter at sea off Sizewell. The North Sea is a large area, but the undisturbed proportion is getting smaller, look out to sea there and you will easily spot Greater Gabbard's hundreds of huge turbines now stretching along the coast as far as the eye can see in both directions. The impact of any development on wintering and migrating seabirds has yet to be fully assessed. Construction materials may also be obtained by off-shore dredging and this should not be considered until a full ecological assessment has taken place.

4. Coastal Erosion

There may also be an impact on coastal erosion as a result of building a jetty and further outfalls. Minsmere has been defended from the sea recently; the North Wall barrier has been raised to shield this part of the reserve from the incursion of the sea, it is presently unknown how, or where, the coast could be eroded by changing tidal flow and the possible effects on the natural protection afforded by sand deposits protecting this stretch of coast. Again full ecological assessment must be undertaken and resultant concerns addressed.

5. Impact on the hydrology of Minsmere and in particular Minsmere Levels.

'Run off' of rainwater presents significant risks of further flooding. 'Run off' is responsible for a great deal of flooding in the UK. Every driveway that is made of tarmac or garden that is concreted over in towns contributes to it, i.e. water running off and not going into the ground. This could happen on a very large scale and result in flooding the nearby Minsmere Levels. Think of the run-off from your garden path multiplied by the huge proposed footprint of Sizewell! Present drainage is provided by Minsmere sluice that is insufficient and needs improving, as it can't cope with present floodwater. The impact of 'borrow pits' for construction materials may also adversely affect the hydrology of the area, including Minsmere Levels (see map).



Minsmere Levels (blue areas) is immediately adjacent to both 'B' and proposed 'C'.

Map © Crown copyright. All right reserved. SWT licence 10016410

There are many other areas of concern, for instance the visual impact of such a structure and the effects upon wildlife tourism and the likely knock-on effect on the economy of this area of Suffolk.

At the time of writing Andy Smith, cabinet minister for planning at Suffolk Coastal, has raised serious concerns about the future development, not least that "EDF wish to withdraw most of the funding for our Sizewell team, and to limit their involvement with the community over the coming year" and that the benefits to local communities may now be considerably reduced.

A role for SOG?

The membership of SOG should support the concerns of county and national organisations, as

Editor: Despite the gloom and doom in some quarters, the need for increased power generation in this country remains and the Government probably has no option than to pursue nuclear generation. Hinkley Point is already underway in Somerset, so chances are Sizewell 'C' could be commissioned - although delays are likely. If so, then Sizewell 'C' would become the largest construction project Suffolk has seen. It would involve a workforce of between 6000 and 9000, with many housed temporarily for approaching ten years in a small 'new-town' close to Leiston. So we really should beware the possibility of the 'Blot' being adjoined by the 'Carbuncle'.

Photo credits:

Bill Baston (front cover & pages 5 & 39); Nicky Anderson (page 36); Steve Aylward (page 23); BBC (page 11); Chris Darby (page 19); EDF model (page 23); Jon Evans (pages 18 & 19); Bella Grieco (Back cover & page 27*); Ian Goodall (pages 11, 20 & 27); Dave Hermon (page 4); Eric Hosking (pages 8 & 9); James Fletcher (pages 34, 35, 36 & 40); Jo Jones (page 29); Rebecca Nason (pages 3, 4, 6 & 28); 'Gadge' Nichols (pages 13 & 14); John Richardson (pages 4, 6, 18, 19, 21 & 36); Steve Scott (page 33 & 37); Lee Woods (page 39).

* Due to the editor's incompetence Bella Grieco, who was actually responsible for the Brecks and AGM photography on pages 27, 28, 30, 31, 32 & 33 of the last issue, was not credited for these images - instead they were erroneously attributed to her father Gi Grieco. Humble apologies to one and all for any upset or confusion caused.

Illustration credits:

Thomas Bewick (page 12); Peter Beeston (page 38); Eric Ennion (pages 13 & 28)

the sheer scale of the Sizewell 'C' development will impinge significantly on an existing SSSI and impact considerably on what is perhaps one of the most significant parts of our coastline for resident birds and a nationally and internationally important migration flyway.

As a conservation organisation we need to keep a weather-eye on the Sizewell 'C' developments and seek to ensure that, the development and future management of Sizewell 'C' continues to contribute, in EDF's own words, "to the delivery of an integrated network of rich habitat along the Suffolk coast".

As members of a group with one of our aims being, 'active lobbying to protect habitats and extend birding amenities', we must do all we can as an organisation and as individuals to:

- lobby using social networking and formal communication to raise our concerns with EDF, local and central government representatives
- bring into the public domain by using directly the local press and social networking to publicise any concerns as and when they arise
- fully support other conservation groups to ensure that: as the key conservation issues arise they are addressed and resolved by EDF

Clearly these conservation issues will need to be fully resolved before any new nuclear power station in this important part of Suffolk's coastline can be justified and visually blighting this section of Suffolk's picturesque coastline still further.

Steve Fryett

Shingle Street & Upper Hollesley Common

20th April 2013

Leader: Steve Fryett

Although there was a cool breeze it was really nice to have some rare sunny weather on this field meeting to Shingle Street - some preceding meetings this year having had a torrid time with the conditions. Of course sunny weather often means clear nights and few migrants to speak of, but that did not stop seventeen members attending the meeting.

Shingle Street

A couple of Barn Swallows at the Coastguard Cottages were the first of the year for several of the group. Goldfinches were quickly noted. They are now amongst the more common species to be found at Shingle Street, seemingly overtaking the Linnet, which we failed to record. Above Oxley Marsh two Common Buzzard were noted as well as a Barn Owl quartering along the far bank. Migrants were few with no warblers seen or heard by the time we passed the allotments. Still heading south, inland of the Martello we soon located a singing Corn Bunting on overhead wires with at least one other present in the area. Also noted were the first warblers, Common Whitethroat, with two seen. Whilst viewing the Corn Bunting at least 10 Common Buzzard were seen at some distance high over Hollesley drifting northward. Keen eyes also found two migrant Yellow Wagtails amongst a field of Rape. A couple more Barn Swallows and Reed Bunting completed the sightings so far.

A quick look out to sea was predictably bereft with just a single Great Crested Grebe recorded. As we walked back to the cars three Greenfinches were noted at the tennis court.

Upper Hollesley

We then moved to Upper Hollesley Common for an early lunch. A pool of water beside the "Crossbill" gate provided a drinking station for three Siskins, one splendid male gave excellent views. A Common Redstart started in song with just two bars and promptly stopped not to be seen or heard again. The late winter had clearly taken its toll on the resident species as no Dartford Warbler, Stonechat or Yellowhammer were noted and, surprisingly, nor was Woodlark. Therefore our walk around this heath was undertaken in record time. We did note a single Redpoll calling as it flew over and several pairs of Long-tailed Tits livened up the afternoon. A Common Lizard out sunbathing scuttled away upon our presence and then proceeded to climb a tree only to fall several feet to the ground, seemingly, unharmed by its misadventure. We failed to see or hear any spring warblers either so we ended the meeting somewhat short of avian records. However, the sunny day did give us a chance to record Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma butterflies.

Impact of the prolonged winter

I was concerned that the prolonged winter and late snow may have had a profound effect on the key Sandling's species. I contacted Nick Mason who regularly visits the Hollesley Commons for his comment. Nick informed me that both Woodlark and Dartford Warbler are present on Upper Hollesley Common, but have been held back by the weather, although it is too early to say if the Dartford numbers have been reduced. The same unfortunately cannot be said of the Stonechat that has suffered and no territories have been located so far this year.

Lakenheath & Lackford

19th May 2013

Leader: Gi Grieco & Dave Pearsons

A good turnout of eighteen members including two new ones, Neal and Pauline, convened at Hockwold Wash lookout for the annual visit to the great RSPB reserve at Lakenheath. With the weather warm and sunny, some had been over cautious with the waterproof clothing, although reports all week had forecast wind and rain.

Heading along the track to New Fen, several Reed and Sedge Warblers were singing with the occasional Reed Bunting, Cetti's Warbler and Whitethroat joining in and the first of a few Cuckoos around the site were heard too. Past the first plantation with a couple of Garden Warblers present, some insect interest from both male and female Orange-tip, a Peacock and a couple of Large Red Damselflies, although insect numbers seemed generally low.



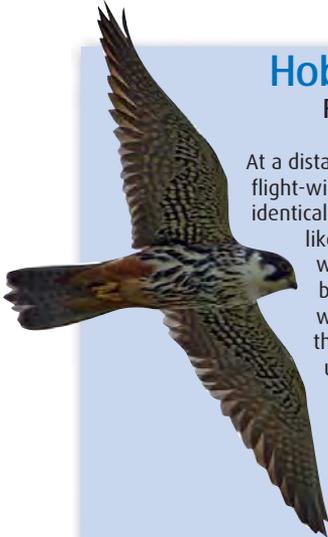
One of the main targets for the day was a male Red-footed Falcon, a rare raptor from Eastern Europe. It had been at the reserve for the last two weeks, so we were relieved when news reached us that it was still present and showing well. From the lookout at New Fen, after initially seeing our first Hobby of the day, the Red-footed Falcon flew into view, at times flying close by and overhead. A fantastic bird to watch, especially so well and to compare with the Hobby's present, we marvelled as it caught and ate insects on the wing. We reluctantly carried on, hoping for another target bird, a speciality of the reserve, Golden Oriole. With the recent cold weather there had been no sign until a couple of days earlier and we found out one had been heard early that morning. We were unfortunately to have no luck in hearing or seeing this sadly declining species, which now seems to be a doomed UK breeding species.

Hobby vs. Red-footed Falcon

Field identification tips from Gi Grieco

At a distance these two related birds can be tricky to separate: flight-wise both perform in a similar fashion and have an almost identical form - although the Hobby's wings are more scythe-like, appearing sharper and longer. Fortunately, colour wise, it's a different matter - the Red-footed's whole blue-grey body and wings contrasts with the Hobby's white collar and heavily flecked underside. Also there is more contrast on the Red-footed Falcon's upperwings with the darker coverts against the silvery-grey primaries.

Up close of course, it's a very different matter, as these two shots taken on the 19th by Ian show. The distinctive red rear and legs of the Red-footed swamp the paler 'trousers' of the Hobby.



A bird that some of us heard, or initially thought so, was a Bearded Tit. The typical 'ping' of that species pricked our ears, until we realised it was a Reed Warbler singing with mimicry included, although it was the first time we could recall it mimicking Bearded Tit. At Joist Fen viewpoint we had a welcome stop for a drink in the hot weather and scanned the reedbeds ahead. Initially half a dozen Hobbies were noted but in all over 20 were counted. Other raptors included a fly over Buzzard, a distant Kestrel and a number of Marsh Harriers, some flying by wonderfully close. Just a few members were lucky to be looking in the right direction at the right time to see a brief Bittern fly in to the reeds. Bittern were also heard booming faintly by some too. We continued to search, hoping to see another star bird, Common Crane, but had no luck although we were told later on by fellow SOG members, Barry and Dawn, that we missed them by about 20 minutes when two Cranes flew in.

A Common Tern flew over the reeds and the same or another was seen hunting along the river on our way back. Amongst the Mute Swans along the riverbank was the Whooper Swan that we had seen last year, still present due to a broken wing, but at least able to survive. Back at New Fen we indulged in further fantastic views of the Red-footed Falcon before heading back to the car park for lunch.

Lackford

Our next port of call was the Suffolk Wildlife Trust reserve at Lackford where upon arrival we were greeted by a Nightingale singing by the car park and a couple of Hobby's overhead. Whilst scanning the sailing lake we were lucky to see a mass emergence of Common Blue Damsel fly, all lacking in their vibrant blue colour, as they took their first flights and to land on nearby vegetation. On the Slough a number of ducks including some Gadwall and along the muddy shore a Little Ringed Plover was picked out. A casual stroll along the tracks visiting other hides resulted in coming across several Blackcaps in the scrub and a variety of ducks and geese out on the water including a male Red-crested Pochard. We returned to the centre to the sound of screeching of Swifts, both from the skies above and from the artificial Swift nests on the side of the centre, which are used to entice the Swifts to use them as a nest site. All agreed that it was a great day with some good birds and that the superb Red-footed Falcon would be long remembered.



Phil Brown

Stone Curlew's recovery falters?

Having achieved over 25 years of almost unbroken year-on-year increase in the numbers of Stone Curlew breeding pairs in England, over the last twelve months this species' recovery may prove to have faltered.



Although it will not be until the end of the 2013-breeding season before the RSPB team will know for sure, there is presently some cause for concern about the growth in the size of the Eastern England Stone Curlew population⁸.

In Eastern England, up to 2012 the RSPB monitored and un-monitored sites indicated a total of circa 288 breeding pairs. This represented a slight increase on the overall estimate for the 2011-breeding season - namely 283 pairs. But this total masked different relative performances across the five different breeding areas in the East of England:

Breeding area	Pairs 2012	Pairs 2011
Brecks monitored Norfolk	113	219 ⁹
Brecks monitored Suffolk	53	-
Brecks unmonitored	68	64
North Norfolk	12	9
Suffolk Coast	14	12
South Cambs	0	0

In addition to these 576 breeding birds, it is suspected there are further unpaired birds, representing juveniles yet to breed and older birds, likely to be present. Thus the total number of Stone Curlews in Eastern England could be just over 600 birds in 2012.

Although the figures in Table 1 above indicate that the Brecks witnessed a slight decrease in 2012, this was offset by modest increases in the North Norfolk and Suffolk Coast populations.

- Impact of weather events -

However, over the last twelve months, this relatively healthy population has been subjected to two serious weather events that may lead to the breeding population plateauing or actually reducing.

Reduced productivity

First, the prolonged period of wet and cold weather during April, May and June 2012 resulted in lower productivity amongst the RSPB monitored

birds in the Brecks. Here productivity was halved from 0.59 per pair in 2011 to 0.25 in 2012. This decline might lead in two years time to a reduced breeding population.¹⁰

Starvation

On Sunday 21st April the author plus two SOG colleagues, whilst undertaking a tetrad recce just east of Cavenham village as preparation for the 2013 BTO Nightingale survey, stumbled across the corpse of a Stone Curlew. This was an un-ringed bird with its plumage surprisingly fresh looking and undamaged, suggesting a young bird. But it was in an extremely emaciated condition with little evidence of fat and poor pectoral muscle tone. The RSPB duly collected the corpse and its subsequent autopsy revealed that its gizzard had been punctured by wire - presumably a desperately hungry bird had mistaken short sections of coated wire for a worm!



Stonie RIP

What had triggered this event? While the 2013 Brecks birds had arrived on schedule this year (Cavenham Heath's birds were again noted on the March 17th this year), March was already proving to be the coldest on record and, almost immediately following their arrival snow arrived and the temperatures plummeted still further, barely rising above 0°C even during the day.

⁸There are fears about the Wessex population too. Although it is suspected reduced observer coverage may have been partially to blame for the estimate for the 2012 breeding population of 122 pairs falling below the 142 recorded in 2011.

⁹At the time of going to press we did not have the 2011 breakdown between the Brecks Suffolk and Norfolk pairs.

¹⁰ Generally speaking Stone Curlews do not breed until they are at least two years, so the effects of the 2012 cold and wet spring is unlikely to impact on the overall breeding population until 2014.

Migration always puts birds under stress, so it is essential that they quickly feed up to recover. This extended cold period (in fact in the words of the Met Office, "March was exceptionally cold") made recovery feeding problematic for all Stone Curlews and for some, such as the 'Cavenham corpse', recovery proved impossible and they starved¹¹.

Along with this corpse, a further 12-20¹² birds were collected during late March and April across the Brecks, with another 7 in Wessex. As the number of corpses collected is generally thought to equate to around 10% of the total number of dead birds¹³, these corpses would represent an immediate drop of between 200-280 out of a UK

population of around 900 Stone Curlews, possibly translating into approaching 100+ fewer pairs nesting this year - a conservation disaster¹⁴.

A serious setback?

Taken together these two weather events could constitute a serious setback for England's Stone Curlew recovery project. If last spring's weather conditions were to be repeated this year, then the favourable trend for this species in England might become stalled, or perhaps reversed turning it back from Amber to Red list status. So let us hope for improved spring weather this year and that this vision proves unduly pessimistic.

Philip Murphy

Looking back – April to June 1963 and 1988

Selected highlights from the 1963 and 1988 Suffolk Bird reports for the period April to June.

50 years ago

Much attention was paid to the breeding populations of our resident species following the very severe weather of January and February, but it was a spectacular summer visitor that really grabbed the breeding season headlines in the spring and summer of 1963. For the first time since 1958, Montagu's Harriers bred in Suffolk, involving one pair on the coast and another in West Suffolk. The coastal pair successfully reared two young but it was a different story in the west where three eggs were laid and incubated for six

weeks. When it became obvious that they were not going to hatch, permission was obtained from Nature Conservancy to remove the eggs for analysis – this revealed traces of five pesticides used in agriculture at that time, including Dieldrin and DDT. This was particularly disappointing given that the farmer on whose land the Harriers bred had sacrificed his hay crop in order that they might remain undisturbed.

Breeding populations of resident species which had endured the infamous 1962/63 winter were judged to be better than expected for Bittern, Green Woodpecker, Long-tailed Tit, Bearded Tit and Bullfinch but well down for Heron, Water Rail, Moorhen, Coot, Curlew, Kingfisher, Wren, Goldcrest and Grey Wagtail.

- Breeding successes -

Of the scarcer breeding species, eight young Marsh Harriers were reared from three nests at Minsmere where two pairs of Garganey also bred. Only two pairs of Sparrowhawks were thought to have probably bred in the county.

¹¹ Two of the corpses collected on the Elveden Estate were ringed - one was a 2001 bird and the other 2006. It was observed by an expert that this showed that it was not just the inexperienced birds that expired.

¹² These two different estimates have been obtained from different authoritative sources in early May which means the author has some uncertainty about the extent of this problem - hence the range of outcomes that follow.

¹³ Professor Rhys Green of the Department of Zoology, Cambridge University is a noted authority on the Stone Curlew and provided this estimate to the RSPB, however, given this is such a large and well-monitored bird we can only hope this figure is lower - perhaps closer to a third; but this is speculation.

¹⁴ Thankfully the initial signs are that a similar number of breeding pairs as 2012 have been found.

Up to six male and six female Ruff remained at Minsmere throughout the summer but no known breeding took place – we read that *“This is the first definite over-summering in the county for a great many years.”* There were signs of expansion by the Avocet; although there were only 55 pairs at Havergate (77 pairs in 1962), twelve-pairs bred *“at another site nearby”* (Orfordness?). For the first time since colonisation in 1947, a pair of Avocets bred at Minsmere where they produced one flying young – at least one of its siblings was eaten by a Heron.

Herring Gulls bred on Orfordness for the first time, with two or three pairs present. Lowestoft’s Kittiwakes had a poor season – bad weather resulted in the destruction of many nests with no more than four young reaching the flying stage.

Five hundred pairs of Sandwich Terns bred on Havergate, where three pairs of Short-eared Owls also bred.

The only breeding Black Redstarts were a pair at Sizewell power station. Further declines were noted in the Whinchat’s coastal breeding population and we also read of this species that it *“still breeds locally in the Brecks but is probably decreasing there also as the forests grow up.”*

- Impact of DDT persists -

Red-backed Shrike totals at Walberswick and Minsmere declined slightly to 12 pairs and nine pairs respectively. In one of the Minsmere shrike nests, four out of five eggs failed to hatch – subsequent analysis revealed traces of DDT and chlordane in the eggs.

An addition to the Suffolk list in this period involved a male Green-winged Teal on the Butley River, 24th April. Other scarce sightings were an adult Purple Heron, Minsmere, 24th June onwards into August; Kentish Plover, Walberswick, 21st April and a Woodchat Shrike, Minsmere, 8th June.

Miscellaneous highlights included up to 1200 Common Scoters off Minsmere, 30th June; up to eleven Ringed Plovers of the race *“tundrae”*, Minsmere, 31st May to 4th June; 110 Bar-tailed Godwits, Havergate, 1st to 21st May; Bar-tailed Godwit, Bury BF Ponds, 4th May; 24 Black Terns, Livermere Lake, 2nd June and a Ring Ouzel in Christchurch Park, central Ipswich, 3rd May.

A surprising report was of five Fieldfares at Lakenheath in mid-June although there was no suggestion of breeding in that area. The colonisation of Suffolk by the Collared Dove was far from complete in 1963 – we read that *“This species is now firmly established in most coastal towns in Suffolk though inland colonisation is slow and irregular.”*

25 years ago

An addition to the county list at Landguard helped to create one of the most embarrassing situations ever recorded in Suffolk ornithology. Suffolk’s first Paddyfield Warbler, and only the third British spring record, was trapped, ringed and photographed at Landguard at 8a.m. on June 11th but was not definitely present after 10a.m.

- Paddy palpitations -

Unfortunately, the hundreds of birders who arrived on site were totally deceived by another bird - an atypically-plumaged Chiffchaff with an unusually prominent supercilium; after having been present for about three days this bird decided to sing, so revealing the awful truth! Twenty-five years later, the memories of this unfortunate episode must still cause palpitations in many of the Paddyfield Warbler’s would-be observers!

Although not as rare as the Paddyfield Warbler, the presence of a pair of Red-necked Grebes on Loompit Lake, Trimley St. Martin from 22nd May to 7th June was equally exciting. They were seen displaying and offering potential nesting material. When one of the grebes could not be located after 7th June there was speculation that “she” could be incubating – this was never proven and the remaining grebe stayed on site until 26th June.

Further north, another potential colonist, a Black-necked Grebe, frequented Benacre Broad from 30th May to 10th June; it displayed to the site’s resident Little Grebes and even constructed a “nest” platform, but failed to attract a mate of its own species.

Breeding results for rare or scarce species included six juvenile Fulmars fledged at Bawdsey Cliffs; female Garganey with three ducklings, Minsmere, 7th June; 54 juvenile Marsh Harriers reared from

25 nests; possible breeding by a pair of Ruff at a coastal site; an overall total of five pairs of Black-tailed Godwits at three coastal sites, but only one successful pair; 209 pairs of Little Terns which reared 160 juveniles (c.100 pairs reared only four juveniles in 2011); thirteen pairs of Black Redstarts including five at Felixstowe; no breeding Whinchats on the coast and only "limited success" in the Brecks; only one pair of Firecrests known to have definitely bred albeit with unknown success and only one pair of Golden Oriole at Lakenheath but, encouragingly, three pairs at a second site and a singing male at a third.

- Many more rarities -

The Paddyfield Warbler was this period's major rarity but there was an excellent supporting cast. This included three Black Kites, two Black-winged Stilts at Alton Water, 5th June then at Livermere Lake next day (and probably the same birds in Buckinghamshire, 8th to 16th June), Kentish Plover, Minsmere, 30th May, two late Dotterels, Kessingland/Benacre, 10th to 13th June, first-summer Sabine's Gull off Southwold, 12th June, Caspian Tern, Minsmere, 11th May, Suffolk's second Whiskered Tern, Minsmere, 26th May (first record had been in September 1910 at Shingle

Street), six Hoopoes, two Wrynecks, Tawny Pipit, Southwold, 20th and 21st May, male Red-spotted Bluethroat, Landguard, 20th May, Suffolk's third and fourth Marsh Warbler records at Bawdsey, 28th and 29th May and Kessingland, 2nd and 3rd June, Icterine Warblers at Landguard on 13th and 15th May, Suffolk's third Subalpine Warbler, Landguard, 23rd and 24th April, Suffolk's third 20th-century record of a Raven, Minsmere, 15th to 20th May and a male Ortolan Bunting, Landguard, 13th to 15th May.

- Unexpected results -

Two completely unexpected records from Lackford Lakes involved a male Long-tailed Duck, May 31st and a female Velvet Scoter next day. Also unexpected were a Water Rail found amongst the cargo in a ship's hold, Felixstowe Docks, 28th May and a male Firecrest found exhausted on a ship in Lowestoft Harbour, 3rd April. As a sign of things to come, a Common Buzzard was seen with food at an undisclosed site, 1st June.

Given the species' current difficulties, the report of 150 Spotted Flycatchers at Landguard, 9th May was more than unexpected - it was nothing short of awesome!

News

Editor: And here are examples of SOG's educational drive: Like other bird clubs, SOG are increasingly concerned that many of the UK public have little understanding and thus regard for birds. As a way of overcoming this the Council decided in 2012 to seek opportunities to create events that would encourage people, especially families and children, to experience the avian wonders around them and, hopefully as a result, support us and birds in the future by becoming more aware and more involved. This decision underpinned Council's willingness to support Roy with a project for his employer company Customer Service Direct (CSD)/SCC and seek additional opportunities such as this at Knettishall:

SOG leads Dawn Chorus walk at Knettishall 28th April

Before dawn on an exceedingly cold and foggy Sunday morning a brave group of 10 members of the public joined two SOG Council members who were to guide them around this SWT reserve. Bird checklists were issued and the group set off for a circuit of the site designed to cover all three of its Brecks habitats - riverside meadows, heath and woodland.

Despite the weather conditions, on the two-hour walk the group saw or heard a total of 38 different bird species, including magnificent views of Barn Owls. This was a reasonable tally, for Knettishall is not a famed birding site, and this total, coupled to the guides' in-depth knowledge of the site, ensured the participants felt well rewarded for braving the elements.

SOG hosts CSD at Minsmere 20th April

Following my promotion of our bird race and fund raising activity at my work place, I was asked to arrange an event for the many CSD families. It's objective being to provide a snapshot of bird watching and ornithology as a whole, and I set about trying to organise an event at Minsmere.

Very quickly, having agreed the idea at SOG Council, and having had several conversations with Adam Rowlands and our very own Robin Harvey (both from Minsmere), we were able to start pulling together a plan of action for the

20th. My original remit was to put on an event for around 50 people, so I had to try and think of a day planner for experiencing the reserve plus some additional activities to ensure we could deliver an engaging and exciting day for our families and friends.

Steve Piotrowski kindly offered a ringing station on the day to be manned by The Waveney Bird Club (WBC), which proved to be a big success. Robin also arranged a pond dipping station in the old car park pond for the day. The event HQ was to be the fantastic Discovery Centre and surrounding Wild Zone, which were also very popular on the day:

Minsmere Fact File 1

Environmental background

The Sandlings¹⁶, of which Minsmere is today a significant component (about 25%), were probably first created by man clearing scrub and woodland some 4000 years ago. The free draining glacial sands and gravels would only sustain hardy vegetation, such as heather, and were not especially conducive to farming.

Known originally as the Sandlands, this was once an extensive belt of heathland and acid grassland that was maintained through sheep grazing, rabbit warrening and clearance to stretch almost continuously from Ipswich to Southwold and covering thousands of hectares.

As the heaths could not provide livestock food throughout the year, so the sheep were grazed sometimes on the (drained) marshes, as well as on the arable lands after harvest. The three land-use types had to be managed as a unit as they were components of the same ecosystem. So, when the sheep went the network collapsed, and there was no longer ecological links between the different components. Myxomatosis in the early 1950s caused a further major reduction in grazing on the heaths and was the final nail in the coffin of the whole network.

Owing to steady farmland depredations, the Sandlings' scale had shrunk to about 16,000 hectares by the early 1800s. By 1900 this area had been further reduced to 10,000 hectares. Then a revolution in twentieth century farming practices that allowed more marginal land to be more readily exploited meant the Sandlings underwent a period of rapid loss - shrinking to less than 2000 hectares by the 1980s. Thanks to the RSPB's works this total has risen again to over 2000.



¹⁶ The present name is a compound word combining the area's defining soil, sand, with the traditional Old English term for heather, ling - hence Sandlings.



Children enjoying the Wild Zone



Checking a ringed bird

With our amazing additional activities planned, we very quickly sourced our 'volunteer guides', largely drawn from SOG Council, as well as John Grant, who had literally to stand in at the 11th hour as one of our SOG volunteers had to pull out on the Friday.

With 61 individuals, including nineteen children, planning to attend the event, organising our 'guests' became vital. So, ahead of the event, I set about pulling together a detailed planner and timetable. This had to accommodate a morning schedule for four Groups of around 10 individuals, with tight timetables and some additional guests in the afternoon. Here is Group 1's timetable:

Introduction	09:30 - 9:40
Discovery Centre - Wild Zone	09:45 - 10:05
Bird Ringing Tent - WBC	10:15 - 10:45
Pond Dipping - RSPB Member	11:00 - 11:30
Bittern Hide - Guided	11:50 - 12:15
Wildlife Lookout - Guided - Was West Hide	12:30 - 12:55

On the day we were blessed with perfect weather, it having been cold for so long, this was a welcome relief and, to reinforce the first signs of spring, we were treated to seeing a fantastic Nightingale in the hand before the event had hardly kicked off as seen right, and before we'd even had a chance to issue everyone with their RSPB binoculars. The crowd massed to catch a view of this star bird at close quarters, to which the children were especially fascinated.

We then split into the four groups, and started our tours with the help of our SOG and RSPB guides. The enthusiasm shown by all the families and the guides was very evident throughout the day.



Releasing the Nightingale



RSPB guides help out...



...while SOG expertise was on hand



Pond dipping and...examining the catch with RSPB help

We were all particularly impressed with the children and their appetite to learn and enjoy the birds, the ringing, and pond dipping.



During the day we managed to rack up a total of 83 species with most people getting to see the iconic Bittern, I know one bird for sure had showed well at times on the new cut between

Wildlife Lookout and South hide. There were also goodly numbers of Marsh Harriers and Avocet, and many heard Cetti's Warbler and Bearded Tit, plus much more.



Is that a Bittern?



Missed it!

Minsmere Fact File 2

Habitats & species

The reserve is around 1050 hectares and comprises the following habitats:

- Grazing marsh: 150ha
- Reedbed: 160ha
- Coastal lagoons: 17.5ha
- Vegetated shingle and dunes: 33ha
- Woodland: 390ha
- Heathland/acidic grassland: 330ha

This rich mosaic of heather, acid grassland, bracken, scrub, marsh, reeds and secondary woodland provides an excellent spectrum of habitat. This diversity means the reserve can sustain a wide range of species :

- 329 bird species recorded on site (of which 85 - 100 species have bred),
- 36 species of mammal
- eight reptiles and amphibians
- 23 dragonfly species
- 33 butterflies,
- over a thousand moths,

It also supports a diversity of:

- flora (672 species)
- fungi (1544).



Bill Oddly briefly joined us



We were also lucky to have author Jeanette Harris there throughout the day, promoting her bird identification using colour keys book. This primarily serves as a children's bird guide, making identification easier for our budding ornithologists. Jeanette and her husband also kindly provided two autographed books as prizes on the day.



Throughout the day we had our own SOG stand up in the Discovery Centre

The 'on-the-day' draw went to Ben Butler while, as agreed amongst the volunteers, the child showing most enthusiasm during the tour went to a young girl, Mary Anderson, pictured right, happily receiving her new bird guide.



Mary Anderson - 'young birder of the day'

Following the event, we received some fantastic feedback, including:

"This was an excellent event – well managed on the day and arranged. Hopefully something that can be repeated or something similar."

"I would like to say a huge thank you to the two wonderful Phil's, who were our tour guides. My son is extremely inquisitive and they were absolutely brilliant with my son Josh and his friend Lewis."

"The pond dipping was really exciting for the children and very educational; the two men leading this were very friendly and helpful, always interacting with the children and getting involved."

"I would like to say a huge thank you for the organisation of this visit. I took my two sons who are aged 7 and 3 and they had an amazing day."

"The bird ringing was really well demonstrated and the use of toy birds being thrown into the net was a brilliant idea for the kids to feel part of it."

"I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone involved in this it was an amazing day which we got lot out of."

The whole afternoon exceeded my expectations."

Finally, I would like to pass on my own personal thanks to all the families who attended, and helped make it a magical day, and my own special thanks to the RSPB and their volunteers, my fellow Suffolk Ornithologists' Group council members for guiding throughout the day, and to the Waveney Bird Club who kindly manned the ringing station for us, thank you one and all, for a tremendously enjoyable day.

Announcement



Bursaries again available

The Council are delighted to announce that it is once more able to offer bursaries of up to £250 per project to support Suffolk-based ornithological studies/activities. The only stipulations being that:

1. the work patently contributes towards the conservation of birdlife in Suffolk
2. that the stipulated work be completed within one calendar year of the Council's support decision and
3. that a full write-up of the project (consisting of an overview/brief scientific findings paper

quantifying the results) be submitted upon completion for subsequent publication in the Harrier of the Suffolk Bird report.

To apply please provide a short project description, plus your contact details and forward these to the Editor. This description will then be passed on to the Council's Bursary sub-committee for consideration. The Council's decision will be final and it undertakes to respond formally to each submission within 30 working days of the Editor being in receipt of the project description.

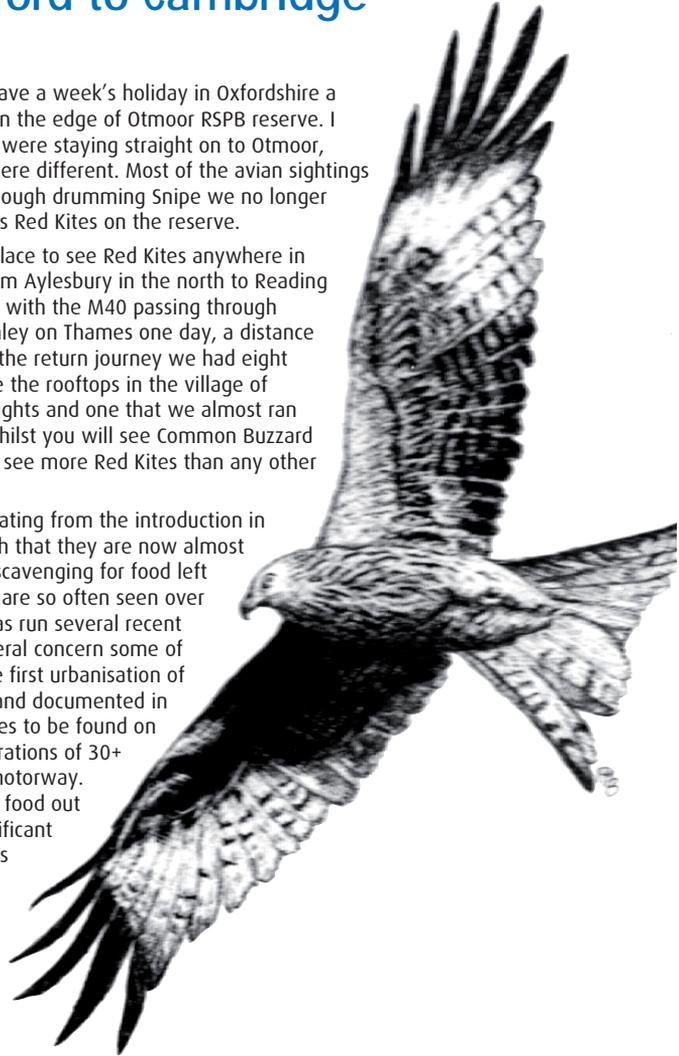
Red Kites - an Oxford to Cambridge slow bird race?

Early in April I had the good fortune to have a week's holiday in Oxfordshire a couple of miles from the city of Oxford on the edge of Otmoor RSPB reserve. I could walk out of the cottage where we were staying straight on to Otmoor, nothing stunning but nice to be somewhere different. Most of the avian sightings were exactly the same as in Suffolk, although drumming Snipe we no longer have back home together with numerous Red Kites on the reserve.

In fact Oxfordshire must be the easiest place to see Red Kites anywhere in the UK. The kite triangle runs roughly from Aylesbury in the north to Reading in the south across to Oxford in the west with the M40 passing through centrally. We drove from Otmoor to Henley on Thames one day, a distance of 20 miles, and noted 16 Red Kites. On the return journey we had eight in one roadside tree, four just feet above the rooftops in the village of Wadlington whilst stuck at some traffic lights and one that we almost ran over picking up carrion from the road. Whilst you will see Common Buzzard in Oxfordshire a bit, I guarantee you will see more Red Kites than any other raptor.

However the success of Red Kites, emanating from the introduction in the Chilterns during 1989 to 1994, is such that they are now almost deemed a pest and are regularly noted scavenging for food left out by humans¹⁵, hence the reason they are so often seen over village houses. The local Oxford Times has run several recent articles on their abundance and the general concern some of the public are now giving this raptor, the first urbanisation of this species has already been observed and documented in Reading. If one checks the various articles to be found on the internet it is not unusual for concentrations of 30+ to be noted, particularly from the M40 motorway. Good intentions from the public to leave food out for Red Kites has no doubt played a significant part in their success story, however let us hope this phenomena does not get out of hand as it did towards the end of the 1800's when the Red Kite was regarded as vermin and persecuted to virtual extinction in the UK.

Suffolk annually records many sightings of Red Kites, with a notable increase in records so far this year from wintering individuals and passage migrants. They still remain an occasional breeding and largely unsuccessful species in Suffolk with the last attempt in the west in 2012, perhaps indicating a slow inclination to colonise further afield. It may only be a matter of a few years before they do achieve the status of "resident breeder" in Suffolk, or will they simply continue to be noted as "Flatford. Red Kite, south at 8.15"? If there is a race eastwards, it appears to be an exceedingly slow one.



¹⁵ This behaviour is of course a reversion to their original role - in medieval times the Red Kite was regarded as the bird of the dump.

Nigel Odin

Subalpines on the Felixstowe Peninsula

The Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* is divided into two main races - a western one *S.c.cantillans* and an eastern one *S.c.albistriata*. Other subspecies exist (*viz. moltoni and inornata*) but these are not thought to have occurred in the area. The recent sighting of an adult male Eastern Subalpine Warbler, at Landguard from 26th to 27th April 2013, stimulated an attempt to race previous records. By looking at the biometrics and some of the descriptions of birds trapped and ringed by the Landguard Ringing Group, a basic analysis reveals the following differences:

Subalpines trapped at Landguard Bird Observatory

Eastern	Adult Male 26 th September to 2 nd October 1986
Western	Adult Male 8 th to 10 th June 1987
Western	First year Male 23 rd to 24 th April 1988
Eastern	First year Male 30 th May 1989
Eastern	First year Female 28 th May 1983
Eastern	Unaged Female 28 th May 1983
Western	First year Male 29 th to 30 th May 2008

Subalpines trapped at Fagbury Cliff

Eastern	Unaged Male 16 th to 23 rd May 1993
Western	First year Female 31 st May 1995

However, it should be added that, as in any bird

population, some individuals may be larger or smaller than the norm, which could result in an incorrect racial assignment. So, that point aside, including the most recent bird there appear to have been a total of six Eastern and four Western birds around the Port of Felixstowe since 1986.

Other Suffolk records

In addition to the ten records left, four others have been recorded in Suffolk. One trapped at Dunwich on 4th June 1989, another recorded as an Eastern at Weybread from 24th to 25th April 1993, yet another at Minsmere from 24th to 25th May 1994 and then one found dead at Leiston on 11th November 2000. Efforts to racially assign the three unraced birds above may be possible if the descriptions of these birds were to be obtained from the archives of the British Birds Rarities Committee. No copies of the descriptions of these birds are held in Suffolk and the specimen of the Leiston bird no longer exists.

Acknowledgements:

Thanks to all those I have asked about the above records - you know who you are.

Editor: So how can we tell these two subspecies apart in the field - with difficulty?

Western vs. Eastern Subalpines field identification tips, with the assistance of Lee Woods

If you, like me in the field, can't tell your Ménétries's from your Rüppell's, then I trust these notes¹⁶ will help you distinguish between Spring Eastern and Western Subalpines.



upper breast. Also, typically, the flanks sometimes appeared weakly washed pale pink (as pictured here), but at other times seemed the same cold greyish-white

The Eastern Subalpine Warbler (pictured right) at Landguard LBO from 26th to 27th was a strikingly different bird from the Western and easy (sic) to identify. It showed the typical combination of powder-blue/grey upperparts, and dark vinous-pink restricted to the chin, throat and

as the rest of the underparts. Further note the submoustachial stripe is better developed/broader in the Eastern. According to the Helm guide the common contact call of the two is different too. The Western's call is described as a 'Tek' while the Eastern is expressed as being a dry 'Tret'.

¹⁶ These were extracted from Shirihai's et al *Sylvia* Warblers, Helm 2001.

Brain Teaser 1

'Tile Wall' teaser

from Clive Collins

For those of you familiar with BBC4's 'Only Connect' intelligence competition (the current series is broadcast on Monday evenings) you'll know one of its rounds features the infamous race against time, the 'Tile Wall'.

For those of you unfamiliar, this consists of sixteen words being presented (see right) that require to be rearranged into four sub-groups, comprising four words each, that are somehow related.

In the bird puzzle below are four groups of four with the same species pre-fix (or suffix) in common (which needs to be specified).

Sounds easy, but beware, Clive has left some false trails. Nevertheless he assures me there is only one correct arrangement. Meantime, give your little grey cells a workout!

Bittern	Bunting	Bustard	Dove
Egret	Gull	Kite	Lark
Pipit	Redstart	Shearwater	Sparrow
Tern	Thrush	Tit	Wheatear

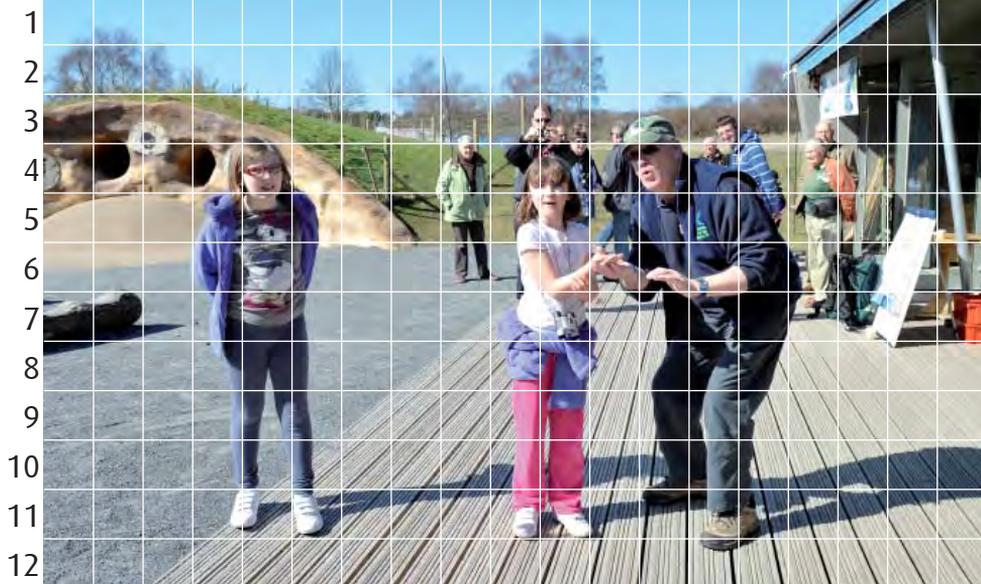
Brain Teaser 2

Spot the birdie

Another teaser designed to exercise your grey matter. This tricky image caught my eye at the CSD Family Day. See if you can work out where the released ringed bird actually was when the photo was taken.

Warning: as with the classic spot the ball competition, the answer is surprising. Note: attendees on SOG's CSD day cannot compete.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S



No prizes I'm afraid, but we will publish the two solutions in the next issue.

Council for 2012:

Officers

Honorary President: Steve Piotrowski
Chairman: Roy Marsh
Vice-Chairman: Steve Abbott
Secretary: Phil Whittaker
Treasurer/Membership Secretary: Matthew Deans
Projects Officer: (vacant)
Magazine Editor: Phil Brown
Website Co-ordinator: Gi Grieco
Publicity: Eddie Bathgate
Bird Report Editor: Nick Mason
Outdoor Events Organiser: Gi Grieco
Indoor Events Organiser: Adam Gretton

Members

Jean Garrod [to 2014]
Craig Fulcher [to 2015]
Robin Harvey [to 2014]
Scott Mayson [to 2015]

Honorary Vice-Presidents

Jean & Ken Garrod
Mike Jeanes
Mike Hall
Robin Hopper



Bird Recorders

North-east Area Recorder:

Andrew Green, 17 Cherrywood, HARLESTON, Norfolk IP20 9LP
Tel: 07766 900063 Email: andrew@waveney1.fsnet.co.uk

South-east Area Recorder:

Scott Mayson, 8 St Edmunds Close, Springfields, WOODBRIDGE IP12 4UY
Tel: 01394 385595 Email smsuffolkbirder@gmail.com

West Area Recorder:

Colin Jakes, 7 Maltwood Avenue, BURY ST EDMUNDS IP33 3XN
Tel: 01284 702215 Email colin@jakes.myzen.co.uk

Treasurer/Membership Secretary

c/o 49c Oak Hill, Hollesley, Suffolk IP12 3JY



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

Who we are

- Founded in 1973 by a group of Suffolk birdwatchers
- Associated with the Suffolk Naturalists' Society
- SOG remains an independent birding group and is a registered charity



What we do

Networking

- A voice for Suffolk birdwatchers
- With established links to many naturalist and conservation organisations

Media

- Strong web presence - www.sogonline.org.uk
- Active Twitter feed - @suffolkbirds1
- Quarterly magazine - The Harrier
- Annual review - Suffolk Birds report

Trips and talks

- Annually (20+) field trips - ideal for novices or experts and young or old alike
- Opportunities to visit hot spots and receive practical ID tips in the field
- Programme of talks and presentations - variety of topics (county, national, or international) with quality speakers



Protecting birds

- Actively lobbies to protect habitats and birding amenities
- Provides a county-wide field force of bird surveyors (100+)
- Organises and promotes bird surveys
- Inspires and undertakes conservation projects
- Bursaries available
- Numerous conservation achievements:
 - Contributed to several species breeding successes (Barn Owls, Peregrines, etc.)
 - Undertakes monitoring and ringing
 - Involvement on community and education projects
 - Organises and hosts dawn chorus walks
 - Assists with fund-raising for bird hides
 - On-going participation in key bird surveys for the BTO, such as BBS, the Bird Atlas, the Nightingale and Woodcock surveys and WeBS
 - Provides surveys for environmental waste companies



Suffolk Ornithologists' Group

For birds & for birders

SOG Registered Charity No. 871446

www.sogonline.org.uk